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UNCLE TOBY AND THE WIDOW WADMAN

FROM THE PAINTING BY CHARLES ROBERT LESLIE, R.A.

Tate Gallery, London.

A scene from Sterne's "Tristram Shandy." "One widow, in particular, Mrs. Wadman, did most notably lay siege to the citadel of my Uncle Toby's heart. A simple stratagem engaged his affectionate attentions. In fact, it did my Uncle Toby's business."

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1923

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First Printing, November, 1923
Second Printing, December, 1923

Made in the United States of America

CONTENTS

PAGE

X. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. 1564-1616. BY HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER 297

The limitations of the Elizabethan Theatre—How the plays were performed—Shakespeare's idea of good acting—The use of the soliloquy—The one-sexed stage—Shakespeare's plays and the English theatre—Educational value of Shakespeare—How to read the plays—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*—*Romeo and Juliet*—Structural balance of the plays—*Twelfth Night*—*Julius Cæsar*—*Macbeth*—Lady Macbeth—Banquo's Murder.

XI. SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON 351

Christopher Marlowe—*Doctor Faustus*—A tragic death—Ben Jonson—Francis Bacon—The great scholar—The blot on Bacon's name—Baconian philosophy—Robert Herrick—A worldly parson—Richard Lovelace—Other contemporary writers—Robert Burton—*Anatomy of Melancholy*—Sir Thomas Browne—A difficult writer.

XII. JOHN MILTON. BY JOHN DRINKWATER . 379

A great poet—Milton's life—The spell of Milton—How to read Milton.

XIII. MARVELL AND WALTON 395

Andrew Marvell—*The Compleat Angler*—Peace and quietude.

XIV. JOHN BUNYAN 403

Bunyan's life—His imprisonment—Various writings—*The Pilgrim's Progress.*

PAGE

XV. Pepys, Dryden, and the Restoration Dramatists 415

Pepys—The famous Diary—As a playgoer—Extracts from the Diary—Evelyn's Diary—Samuel Butler—*Hudibras*—John Dryden—A great poet—The Restoration dramatists—Congreve and Wycherley.

XVI. French Literature in the Age of Louis XIV 435

Pascal—The French Academy—Pierre Corneille—Descartes—Molière—His life—His qualities as a writer—*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*—Jean Racine—A supreme French writer—Jean de La Fontaine and Charles Perrault—Perrault's fairy tales—La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*.

XVII. Pope, Addison, Steele, Swift . . . 451

Alexander Pope—His character—*Rape of the Lock*—*The Dunciad*—*Essay on Man*—Addison and Steele—The rise of the modern essay—The England of Queen Anne—Addison's—career—*The Tatler*—*The Spectator*—*Tatler* and *Spectator* compared—An abbey burial—Jonathan Swift—His life and character—Relations with Stella—A master of prose—*Tale of a Tub*—*Gulliver's Travels*.

XVIII. The Rise of the Novel 483

Defoe—His life—*Robinson Crusoe*—Richardson's life—*Clarissa*—Henry Fielding—A great writer—*Tom Jones*—Laurence Sterne—His life—*Tristram Shandy*—A tragic death—Tobias Smollett—*Roderick Random*—*Humphry Clinker*—Mrs. Radcliffe and Miss Edgeworth—Anne Radcliffe—Maria Edgeworth—Jane Austen—The perfect realist—Her life—The theme of her novels.

XIX. The Eighteenth-Century Poets . . 507

Chatterton—Thomas Gray—James Thomson—William Cowper.

XX. Dr. Johnson and His Circle . . . 519

"A vile melancholy"—Johnson's Dictionary—*The Rambler*—*Rasselas*—*The Lives of the Poets*—Johnson's Talk—Oliver Goldsmith—*The Traveller*—*The Citizen of the World*—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—Edmund Burke—Great thoughts in great prose.

PAGE

XXI. Edward Gibbon and Other Eighteenth-Century Prose-Writers 541

Gibbon—Early years—The great History—Horace Walpole—Notable prose-writers—James Boswell—White of Selborne—The *Letters of Junius*.

XXII. Robert Burns 557

A national shrine—Early struggles—The Kilmarnock edition—The poet in Edinburgh—Tardy appreciation—A nation's poet—James Hogg—"The Ettrick Shepherd."

XXIII. The Literature That Made the Revolution 579

Voltaire—A great satirist—Diderot and the encyclopædists—The *Encyclopædia*—Beaumarchais—Jean-Jacques Rousseau—Life and work—The Bible of the Revolution—Rousseau's *Confessions*.

XXIV. Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing . . . 597

Goethe—A great man of letters—Influence of Goldsmith—Faust—Schiller—A close friendship—Lessing.

XXV. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Blake 615

William Wordsworth—Early years—The story of Annette—*Tintern Abbey*—*The Happy Warrior*—Poems of solitude—Coleridge—Private Comberback—Drift—Southey—The *Life of Nelson*—Hood—Moore—William Blake—Poems of beauty and simplicity—William Cobbett—Rural sides.

XXVI. Byron, Shelley, Keats 647

Byron—Harrow and Cambridge—The grand tour—The narrative poems—Byron's spell—Exiled—*Don Juan*—A soldier's grave—Percy Bysshe Shelley—*Prometheus Unbound*—Emilia Viviani—Prose writings—John Keats—Early days—*The Eve of St. Agnes*.

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman . . *Coloured Frontispiece*
From the painting by Charles Robert Leslie, R.A. Tate Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

The Monument to Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey . . . 300
Photo: H. N. King.

Five Genuine Autographs of Shakespeare 301
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Othello and Desdemona before the Senate 301
From the painting by C. Becker.

The Droeshout Shakespeare, from the Title-page, First Folio, 1623 Edition of His Works 308
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

The Chandos Shakespeare 309
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Mr. Arthur Bourchier as "King Henry VIII." 316
By courtesy of B. J. Simmons & Co., Ltd., Costumiers, London. Photo: F. W. Burford.

Inscription on the Stone over Shakespeare's Grave, Stratford-on-Avon Church 316
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"The Taming of the Shrew," by Sir John Gilbert, R.A. . . 317
Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Birmingham. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Play Scene from "Hamlet," after Maclise 317
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Miss Ellen Terry as "Lady Macbeth" (*Coloured Illustration*) . 320
From the painting by John S. Sargent, R.A. National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

FACING PAGE

"Prince Arthur and Hubert," by W. F. Yeames, R.A. . . . 324
Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Manchester. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Forbes Robertson as "Othello" 324
Photo: W. & D. Downey.

Ellen Terry as "Portia" 325
After the painting by Mrs. Jopling Rowe. Photo: L. Caswall Smith.

Sir H. Beerbohm Tree as "Macbeth" 325
By courtesy of B. J. Simmons & Co., Ltd., Costumiers, London. Photo: Daily Mirror Studio.

Sir H. Beerbohm Tree as Falstaff, and Miss Ellen Terry and Mrs. Kendal as "The Merry Wives of Windsor" 332
From the painting by the Hon. John Collier. Photo: Henry Dixon & Son.

Mr. A. Bourchier as Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice" . 332
From the painting by Chas. A. Buchel. By permission of Mr. A. Bourchier.

Sir Henry Irving as "Hamlet" 333
From the painting by Edwin Long, R.A.

Mary Anderson as "Helena" 336
Copyright Sarony.

Jane Cowl as "Juliet" 336
Copyright White Studios.

Edwin Booth as "Hamlet" 337

John Barrymore as "Hamlet" 337
Copyright Francis Brugière.

Sig. Salvini as "Othello" 337

Trial Scene from "The Merchant of Venice" 340
Photo: Ellis & Walery.

Shakespeare's Birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon before Restoration 340
Photo: F. Frith & Co., Ltd.

The Globe Theatre, on Bankside, Southwark 341
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"Trial of Queen Katherine, Queen of Henry VIII," by Harlowe 341
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FACING PAGE

BEN JONSON, BY G. HONTHORST 364
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

DAVID GARRICK AS ABEL DRUGGER IN BEN JONSON'S "THE ALCHEMIST" 364
From a mezzotint by Zoffany. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF BACON'S ESSAYS . . . 365

TITLE-PAGE OF BURTON'S "ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY" . . . 365

ROBERT HERRICK 372
Photo W. A. Mansell & Co.

FRANCIS BACON, BY PAUL VAN SOMER 372
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JEREMY TAYLOR 372

SIR THOMAS BROWNE 372

PART OF THE ORIGINAL MS. OF PARADISE LOST 382
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

CONCLUDING LINES OF MILTON'S "LYCIDAS" 382
From the original MS. draft in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN MILTON, PAINTED BY PICTER VAN DER PLAAS 383
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT ST. GILES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE . . 383
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"SAMSON AGONISTES" 386
From the painting by G. F. Watts. Photo: Fredk. Hollyer.

"MARVELL'S LAST MEETING WITH MILTON," BY G. H. BOUGHTON, R.A. 387
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN MILTON COMPOSING "PARADISE LOST" 387
After Munkacsy. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MILTON DICTATING "SAMSON AGONISTES" 390
From a painting by J. C. Horsley, R.A. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

IZAAK WALTON, BY JACOB HUYSMAN 398
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FACING PAGE

ANDREW MARVELL, FROM THE PAINTING BY ADRIAN HANNEMAN (*Dated* 1658) 398
City Art Gallery, Hull. Photo: by kind permission of the *Sphere*.

TITLE-PAGE, FIRST EDITION "THE COMPLEAT ANGLER," IZAAK WALTON 398
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"CHRISTIAN" IS TROUBLED 406
From the etching by William Strang. By permission of The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.

"BUNYAN AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-SIX," BY THOS. SADLER . . . 406
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH 407
From the etching by William Strang. By permission of The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.

THE WIFE OF BUNYAN INTERCEDING FOR HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON . 407
After G. Duvall. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"CHRISTIAN" AND "HOPEFUL" IN THE DUNGEON 410
From the etching by William Strang. By permission of The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.

"CHRISTIAN" FIGHTS "APOLLYON" 411
From the etching by William Strang. By permission of The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.

"THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON," BY STANHOPE A. FORBES . . 422
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN DRYDEN, BY KNELLER 423
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SAMUEL PEPYS, PAINTED AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FOUR BY JOHN HAYLS 423
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FACSIMILE OF A PARAGRAPH FROM THE DIARY WRITTEN BY PEPYS IN SHORTHAND 423

"LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME" (*Coloured Illustration*) . . . 438
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

SCENE FROM "LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME," BY W. P. FRITH, R.A. . 440
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"THE LION IN LOVE," BY CAMILLE ROQUEPLAN 441
Wallace Collection, London. Photo: Wallace Collection.

FACING PAGE

MOLIERE 444
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"LA MALADE IMAGINAIRE," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A. 444
South Kensington Museum. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

JEAN RACINE 445
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

J. DE LA FONTAINE, BY DE TROY 445
Bibliothèque de Genève. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BLAISE PASCAL 445
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"THE REJECTED POET. LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND POPE," BY W. P. FRITH, R.A. 456
Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY GOING TO CHURCH," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A. 457
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SCENE FROM "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA," BY HOGARTH 460
National Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

TITLE-PAGE OF POPE'S "THE DUNCIAD," 1728 461

CHARACTERS WHO FREQUENTED BUTTON'S COFFEE-HOUSE ABOUT THE YEAR 1720 468
After a drawing by Hogarth. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ADDISON'S WALK, OXFORD 468
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOSEPH ADDISON, BY KNELLER 469
Bodleian Library. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JONATHAN SWIFT, AFTER MARKHAM 469
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ALEXANDER POPE. ATTRIBUTED TO WILLIAM HOARE 469
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SIR RICHARD STEELE, BY J. RICHARDSON 469
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

A SCENE FROM GULLIVER'S TRAVELS 474
From a painting by Willy Pogány. Reproduced from the Frontispiece in "Gulliver's Travels," by courtesy of the artist, Willy Pogány, and the publishers, The Macmillan Company.

FACING PAGE

"Swift and Stella," by Margaret Isabel Dicksee 475
Photo: B. P. C.

Tobias Smollett 486
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Laurence Sterne 486
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"Yorick and the Grisette," by Gilbert Stuart Newton . . 486
Tate Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Samuel Richardson, by Joseph Highmore 486
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"Robinson Crusoe Explaining the Scriptures to Friday," by A. Fraser 487
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"Defoe in the Pillory," by Eyre Crowe 487
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Jane Austen 496
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Drinking to Her Best Affections 496
Reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

"Mr. Darcy, You Must Allow Me to Present this Young Lady to You as a Very Desirable Partner" 497
Reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

"John Gilpin," by T. Stothard, R.A. 510
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Chatterton, by Mrs. E. M. Ward 510
Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Bristol. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"The Death of Chatterton," by H. Wallis 511
Tate Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Thomas Gray, the Author of the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," by J. G. Eccardt 514
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

The Summer-house in the Garden Adjoining Cowper's House at Olney 514
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FACING PAGE

Dr. Samuel Johnson, from the painting by Sir J. Reynolds . 524
National Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Edmund Burke, M.P., by Reynolds 525
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Dr. Johnson's House in Gough Square, Fleet Street . . . 525

Dr. Johnson's Great Arm-chair 525
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"Dr. Johnson at the Mitre," by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (*Coloured Illustration*) 528
Tate Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, by Reynolds 532
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"A Literary Party at Sir Joshua Reynolds'," by James E. Doyle . 532
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

James Boswell, by Sir J. Reynolds 533
National Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Interior of "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese," Fleet Street . . 533

"Johnson, Goldsmith, and Boswell at the Mitre Tavern," by Eyre Crowe, A.R.A. 536
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"Dr. Johnson Rescuing Goldsmith from his Landlady" . . 537
After E. M. Ward, R.A. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"The Chariot Race," by Professor Alexander Wagner (*Coloured Illustration*) 544
Manchester Art Gallery. Copyright photo: Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Manchester.

Edward Gibbon 548
After the painting by H. Walton. National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

John Locke 548

Ruins of the Forum, Rome 549
Photo: Anderson.

Attila 552
The Vatican, Rome. Photo: Alinari.

FACING PAGE

JULIAN THE APOSTATE PRESIDING AT A CONFERENCE OF SECTARIANS . 553
After the painting by E. Armitage, R.A. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo Rischgitz Collection. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.

BURNS 560
Nasmyth's original portrait, painted 1787. National Portrait Gallery, Scotland. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE MEETING OF BURNS AND SCOTT, IN SCIENNES HOUSE, EDINBURGH, THE RESIDENCE OF PROFESSOR ADAM FERGUSON, IN THE WINTER OF 1786, AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE KILMARNOCK EDITION OF HIS POEMS 561
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JAMES HOGG, THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD 568
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BURNS'S COTTAGE. THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE POET 568
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

TAM O'SHANTER 569
After the picture by John Burnet. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

PART OF ORIGINAL MS. OF "TAM O'SHANTER," BY ROBERT BURNS . 570
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ALLOWAY KIRK AND THE BURIAL-PLACE OF BURNS'S FATHER . . . 570
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

BURNS'S HIGHLAND MARY 571
By Bouvier. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

AULD BRIG TO NEW BRIG: "I'LL BE A BRIG WHEN YE'RE A SHAPELESS CAIRN" 571
From a sketch by J. Campbell. Photo: Stephen & Pollock, Ayr.

VOLTAIRE 582
After a portrait by Alix. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

VOLTAIRE 582
After the painting by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

VOLTAIRE 583
Musée Carnavalet, Paris. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"TO VERSAILLES!" AN INCIDENT OF THE EARLIER DAYS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1789, BY VAL C. PRINSEP, R.A. 583
Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Sheffield. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

A GAY BARBER OF SEVILLE 584
From the painting by F. Maso. Photo: Braun.

FACING PAGE

DENIS DIDEROT 585
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BEAUMARCHAIS 585
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

J. J. ROUSSEAU 585
After the painting by Albrier. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ROUGET DE L'ISLE SINGING "THE MARSEILLAISE" 592
After the painting by Pils, in the Louvre, Paris. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

LOUIS XVI AND FAMILY IN HIS PRISON IN THE TEMPLE . . . 593
After E. M. Ward, R.A. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

GOETHE, BY STIELER 606
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE MEETING OF FAUST AND MARGARET 606
From the painting by J. Tissot in the Luxembourg, Paris. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

LAOCOON 607
The Vatican, Rome. Photo: Anderson.

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER 610
Photo: Hanfstaengl.

MARGARET IN THE CHURCH 610
Photo: B. P. C.

MEPHISTOPHELES AND FAUST 610
After the etching by Edmund J. Sullivan.

G. E. LESSING 611
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

TELL'S FLIGHT 611
From a Frieze in Tell's Chapel. Photo: Wehrli, Zurich.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, BY R. B. HAYDON 618
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH, THE POET'S SISTER 618
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DAFFODILS 619
Copyright photo: R. A. Malby.

DOVE COTTAGE, GRASMERE 622
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FACING PAGE

GRASMERE FROM RED BANK 622
Photo: Valentine.

TINTERN ABBEY 623
Photo: Valentine.

THE HAPPY WARRIOR (*Coloured Illustration*) 624
After the painting by G. F. Watts. Photo: Fredk. Hollyer.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE 626
After Allston. National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DEATH'S DOOR: FROM BLAIR'S "GRAVE" 627

"THE ANCIENT MARINER" 627
Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Gay & Hancock, Ltd., from their edition of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

CHRISTABEL AND GERALDINE 630
From the picture exhibited in the Royal Academy by A. C. Cooke. Photo: Henry Dixon & Son.

RICHARD III AND THE GHOSTS OF HIS VICTIMS 631
Reproduced by permission of George A. Macmillan, Esq.

"WHEN LOOKING WESTWARD, I BEHELD A SOMETHING IN THE SKY" . 640
Reproduced by permission of Messrs. G. G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., from their edition of "The Ancient Mariner," after the drawing by Willy Pogány.

WILLIAM BLAKE, BY PHILLIPS 641
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, AT THE AGE OF 22 641
Drawn by Robert Hancock. National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

RYDAL MOUNT, WORDSWORTH'S HOME 641
Copyright photo: G. P. Abraham, Ltd., Keswick.

THE BURNING OF SHELLEY'S BODY 650
From the painting by Louis Edward Fournier. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MAZEPPA, PRINCE OF THE UKRAINE 651
After H. Vernet. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

GEORGE GORDON, SIXTH BARON BYRON (*Coloured Illustration*) . . 656
After the painting by T. Phillips. National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

FACING PAGE

West Front of Newstead Abbey 662
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

The Bride of Abydos 663
From the painting by Delacroix. The Louvre, Paris. Photo: Braun.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, by George Clint 668
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MS. of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage 668
Copied from Byron's original MS. in the British Museum. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Lord Byron 668
From the mezzotint by C. Turner, after the painting by W. E. West, painted at Pisa, 1822. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"The Shipwreck of Don Juan," by Delacroix 669
The Louvre, Paris. Photo: Alinari.

Don Juan, Shipwrecked on the Cyclades, Discovered by Haidee, the Pirate's Daughter 669
From the painting by Ford Madox Brown in the Luxembourg. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

Keats's Grave in the Old Protestant Cemetery at Rome . . 672
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"The Eve of St. Agnes" 672
After the painting by Maclise. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Keats's House: Lawn Bank, Hampstead 673
Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Venus and Anchises 673
From the painting by Sir W. B. Richmond, R.A. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.

The Monument to Percy Bysshe Shelley 676
After the Engraving by G. Stodart, from the Group by H. Weekes, A.R.A. Christchurch Church, Hants. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

Keats, by W. Hilton 676
National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"Lorenzo and Isabella," by Millais 677
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.

X

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

By Harley Granville-Barker

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

By Harley Granville-Barker

SHAKESPEARE was an Elizabethan playwright. Let us begin by emphasising that obvious, but often, as it would seem, that half-forgotten fact. He wrote plays which were lively and amusing, which were stirring and profoundly searching, and he wrote them to be acted in the theatre he knew. Our puritans destroyed that theatre and broke its traditions. And had it not been for the enterprise of literary pirates in his lifetime and the devotion of a few friends after his death, he might be little more than a name to us now. He himself published nothing but a couple of narrative poems. They were a young man's bid for fame, and a dozen other poets of the time wrote the same sort of thing about as well.

But in the famous memorial volume of his collected plays, known as the First Folio, a contemporary could tell us that "He was not of an age, but for all time," could call him

> . . . Soule of the age.
> The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!—

could say

> Shine forth, thow starre of Poets, and with rage
> Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
> Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,
> And despaires day, but for thy Volumes sight.

We may balance against the conventional use of hyperbole on such an occasion the fact that Ben Jonson both knew what he was talking about when it came to estimating plays and was as little apt, apparently, as any man to indulge his friends with flattery—even behind their backs.

It is worth noting, too, in view of a later and as famous tribute, Milton's—

> . . . Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child
> Warbled his native wood-notes wild——

that Jonson would have none of such appreciation.[1] He insists that ". . . a good Poet's made, as well as born" and is careful to tell us that Shakespeare sweated hard at the Muse's anvil to produce his "well turned and true filed lines."

In latter times Shakespeare has been all but deified. It is sufficiently terrible to become a classic, and that fate would anyhow have cast some shadow on the joyousness of his work. But the hierophants of this worship, to make a god, have killed a man, and, really, they do but repel people from such a frigid shrine. Shakespeare himself, it is true, had some contempt for the vulgarity of his audience; like most artists he hated a mob. But he would, one hazards, have been dumbfounded at some of the latter-day prophesyings in his name. So, when we begin by saying that he was a playwright, using particularly the craftsmanlike term, it is for a hint that we must base our knowledge of him, as far as can be, upon what he was *in* his age and *to* his own time. From that point leads the plain man's path, at least, to love of Shakespeare.

There could, then, be no better way of approach than the simple one which was open to the Elizabethan playgoer when he rowed across to the Bankside to the Globe Theatre to see *Hamlet* played. But that way can no longer in completeness be provided us. Shakespeare still speaks from his pages with an

[1] We need not, though, consider this Milton's last word on the matter.

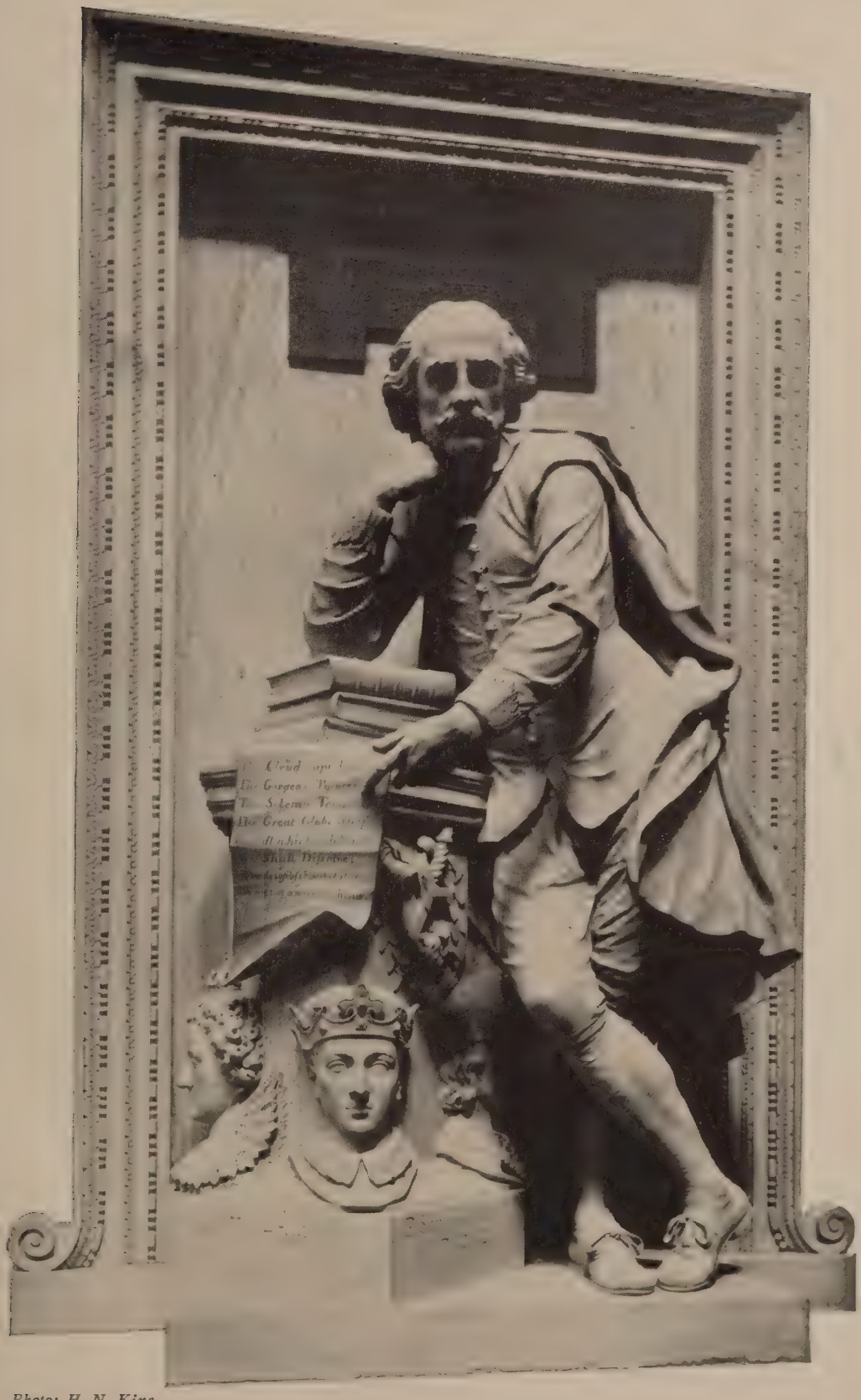

Photo: H. N. King.

THE MONUMENT TO SHAKESPEARE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

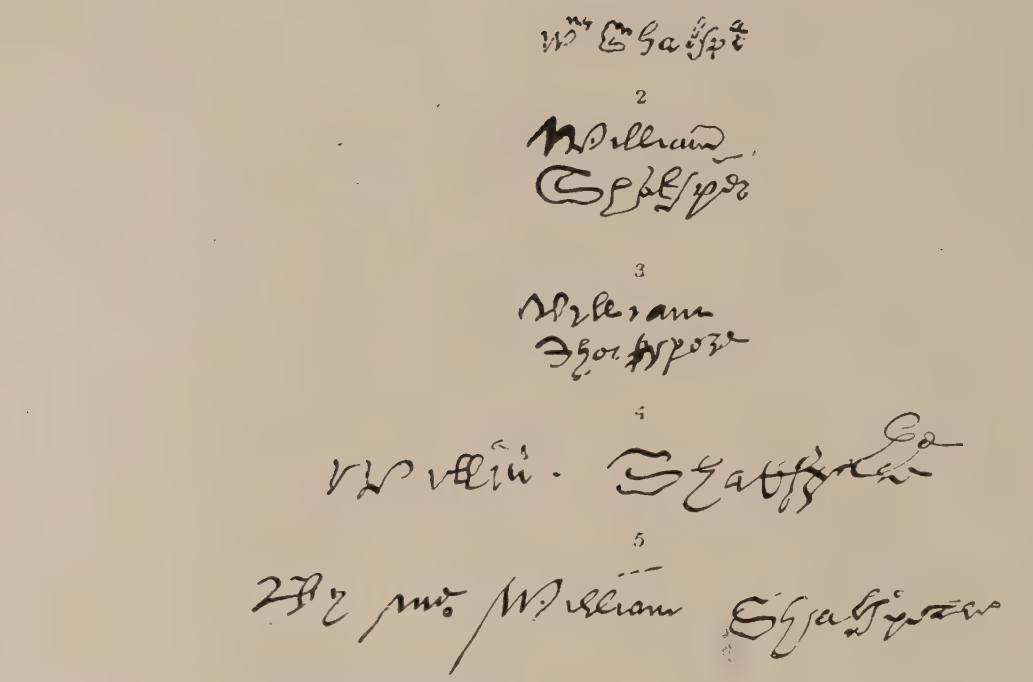

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

FIVE GENUINE AUTOGRAPHS OF SHAKESPEARE

No. 1 is from Shakespeare's Mortgage, 1612–13.
No. 2 is from Mr. Malone's Plate II, No. X.
No. 3 is from the first brief of Shakespeare's Will.
No. 4 is from the second brief of the Will.
No. 5 is from the third brief of the Will.

From the painting by C. Becker.

OTHELLO AND DESDEMONA BEFORE THE SENATE

Desdemona. My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.

Othello, Act I, Scene 3.

Elizabethan tongue. Even could his modern actors learn to use one we should still lack the Elizabethan ears for listening. And such a studying, either to speak or to listen, would kill just that spontaneous ease of appeal and response which is the very life of the theatre. How near we can come to that simple way of approach is a matter worth discussing; but the present point to make is only that these plays, like any others, should first be seen and heard in a theatre. No one, as a first step, wants to read an essay on Shakespeare, nor to study him in a class room, nor even to ponder him silently in a fireside armchair. The first process must tend to de-naturalise him (though we will here strive against that sin); the second does, as a rule, quite positively succeed in making a monster of him. While, for the third, if we are to try and imagine the play abounding in life, as he meant it should, we need, to begin with, as much technical knowledge as does a musician sitting to read over the score of a symphony. Further, no effort of a single imagination can supply in any form the diverse incalculable element of a play's acting, the human co-operation which finally makes it live.

To avoid misunderstanding though, let us insist on this about armchair students. The theatre, through two hundred years and more, has, more often than not, but abused its heritage of Shakespeare's plays, and it is to the student that we owe much of their preservation in honour. But it is true, too, past much dispute, that criticism, appreciation, speculation, excursions upon the significance of the poet's philosophy and the like, are proportionately futile as they tend to ignore for the basis of their contentions, Shakespeare, the Elizabethan playwright.

The Limitations of the Elizabethan Theatre

Let us first consider, then, his playwright's task in its very narrowest sense. He wrote for a theatre that was structurally simple. Four boards and a passion, it has been said, are all that is needed for the making of great drama, and certainly Shake-

speare had to learn to rely upon little else. We may picture his early plays given in broad daylight upon a bare stage, backed probably by some hangings, painted to resemble tapestry, through openings in which the actors could come and go. The audience, in composition and temper, we could best match to-day by looking, not into a fashionable theatre, but in upon a good boxing match. We should but have to exchange for the baser modern elements that batten upon sport a few Elizabethan rufflers, apt for a brawl and too handy with their daggers. But plays were then thought of as very good sport; one can read that into the origins of our theatre. They were sport of the crudest kind too, more often than not, reeking and echoing with blood and thunder—a melodramatist of to-day would blush for it!—and thick with such clowning as we relegate to a circus.

But there was this, too, about that audience of prentices, courtiers, citizens, light ladies and bullies. They could be stirred by the sound of poetry. And upon that fact a great drama was founded. Shakespeare, who was sensitive to most current things and let little that touched him pass unexpressed, has noted the comic incongruous extreme of the matter in the character of Ancient Pistol—ruffian and coward, more highwayman than soldier, but a great theatre-goer evidently, for his swagger is to spout blank verse.

There would be more ways than one, then, of capturing such an audience. You could play down to it. Equally, though less easily doubtless, you could stir it to unwonted enthusiasms, for there is no susceptibility like this susceptibility to poetry. Shakespeare was a popular dramatist from the first, and, apparently, he never ceased to be one (though with occasions of failure, one may be sure, and it is not to be supposed that *Troilus and Cressida* had the vogue of *As You Like It,* or that Coriolanus was as quoted a character as Falstaff). But it is interesting to surmise how, without losing touch with his public, he yet developed his art, carrying them with him into unfamiliar

regions of emotion and expression. For it is a far cry from the simple fun and simpler romance of *The Comedy of Errors* and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the spiritual world of King Lear and to some of the talk in *Cymbeline*. It may be, though, that in the very latest plays he did "lose touch" a little. There are signs of it.

During Shakespeare's playwright's career, which ran from about 1591 to 1611, the physical features of theatre and stage changed somewhat. The process was probably the natural and common one, by which plays demanded new contrivances and these in turn suggested new devices for other plays. The whole question of the finally developed structure of the Elizabethan stage and the technical uses made of it is still one involving much dispute, and what is to be written here aims at no more than rough accuracy. The data are many in the sense that each surviving play, seen in the light of its possible staging, contributes to them. But the fact that the change was, up to a point, very rapid, and the probability that each theatre was structurally developed to some extent upon the lines of its own convenience, makes more of the puzzle. Some few traditions of stagecraft had been inherited from the vanished and vanishing "mysteries" and moralities.[1] But the directest influence of the sort upon the newly professionalised drama was its use of the inn-yard for a theatre.

These yards were surrounded, as a rule, upon all four sides by balconies. Three sides of these and the ground accommodated the audience. On the fourth side stood the stage—projecting twenty feet or so, if that much room could be spared—while the balcony immediately above could be used as an upper stage, for the window of a house or the battlements of a castle, or to hold the musicians if need be. It was easily curtained, and from its lower edge could be hung the arras that backed the

[1] This side of the question may be studied to the full in G. K. Chambers' *The Mediæval Stage.*

main stage itself. To this sort of setting the earlier Elizabethan plays were necessarily fitted. And the theatre buildings which prosperity soon provided, The Theatre, and later the Globe (where Shakespeare's best work was done), the Fortune, the Rose, the Swan—what charming names they found for them!—merely turned it to better account. The actors in their fine clothes were now protected from sun and rain by a pent-house roof. The arras at the back was made to draw apart and disclose an inner stage. This was first used probably as a convenient place from which to bring forward to the outer stage such properties as tables and thrones and the big curtained beds of the time. Later, a part of the play's action might be carried on there and, later still, something akin to painted scenery may have been set up, the curtains drawing to disclose it. This last possibility has been the subject of acrimonious dispute. But at some time or other the inner stage did begin to be so used, for we use it so now. Our modern stage is its elaboration; while bit by bit—shrinking finally to the curved stage-front which exists in some theatres still—the rest of our Elizabethan inheritance has disappeared. Now this enlargement—as may easily be seen if a plan is drawn—necessarily led to the provision of other means of entrance, and two doors were placed at the side and back of the main stage. Side balconies were brought into use, too, so that the players in them could both see what was happening on the inner stage and could be more conveniently talked to by the players below. At this point though—but for the making of a few trap-doors and the machinery for the lowering of some visionary god from the regions of the roof—the structural development of Shakespeare's stage halted.

It is well to have this picture in one's mind, for many seeming oddities in the plays become simple and satisfactory in its setting. It can surely but help one's appreciation of any art to have in mind the immediate circumstances under which it flourished. It is quite vital to a full understanding of Shake-

speare's plays that one should grasp the essentials of his stage-craft, should see how these were imposed upon him.

How the Plays Were Performed

The plays, for instance, were performed as a rule in daylight. This in itself would rule out any mystery making of a tricky kind. So whatever supernatural impression was to be made by the Ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth,* or the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* must be due to the powers of the actors and the imagination of the audience.

Again, the main stage was thrust right out among the audience. Some of the audience, indeed, sat on the stage itself. This seems to us an outrageous proceeding, but the custom endured for a century or more, and for even longer in France than in England. We must remember though, that little or no pictorial illusion was being attempted and always, in such a connection, that a theatrical convention is the most easily accepted or discarded of things. Italian actors still sometimes stop the play's action to return and bow after an applauded exit. In England, till a few years ago, plays and operas were performed with the auditorium lights turned full on, and opera box conversation hardly ceased because the curtain had risen. At the best then, an Elizabethan performance had to take account of an audience on three sides of it, while at the worst, one supposes, an actor might now and then be tripped up by the sword of some gallant gentleman who was more intent upon his own well-posed attitude than upon the play.

Now from this peninsulation of the stage several things follow. The making of stage pictures was impossible and graphic effects must be thought of, as it were, in the round. This led to an elaboration of the pageantry of fine dresses and stately movement. The dresses—to sustain such close inspection—had to be fine indeed. Large sums were spent on them. A king's costume might cost more than the writing of the play

he appeared in; though, truly, many of the authors were ill enough paid. Wealthy young nobles, however, who still lacking such outlets for extravagance as gambling and racing, spent unbelievable sums on their clothes, would endow the theatre wardrobe now and then with their surplus. Such pageantry grew in favour. But no play of Shakespeare's seems to have been swamped with it till, for an elaborate production of Henry VIII (in the writing of which he had indeed but a part) the firing of a real gun fired the whole Globe Theatre, and the fine clothes—and Shakespeare's own manuscripts probably—were all burnt.

But when we read in *Antony and Cleopatra* "Camidius marcheth with his land army one way over the stage" we must picture a symbolic little procession; half a dozen men-at-arms, perhaps, and a standard bearer. If the men-at-arms marched well though, and the standard bearer bore his standard and himself as if they were—as in reality they are—the symbol of armed power and honour, this would suffice. The imagination of an Elizabethan audience was counted on for the rest.

And again, the attention of this audience, so placed that they might well be more conscious of themselves than of the play, could best be held—could perhaps only be held—by constant movement. The modern scenic stage, lit and painted, is a focus for the eye and can half hypnotise its spectators before ever the actors begin. The modern dramatist may take advantage of this to indulge in a reserved quiet of action or a length of preparation for his crises, and in niceties of pictorial effect that would all be futile upon the bare peninsula of the Elizabethan stage. There one must get to work without delay, and one must keep at work.

But the simpler convention may confer the greater freedom. If the play's action must be "kept going," it may equally go hither and thither at the author's will. In the History plays we are taken from Court to Camp, and from Camp to Battlefield with a celerity which leaves the modern theatre halting.

In *Richard III* the tents of the opposing generals are pitched on opposite sides of the stage.[1] If we look across the footlights for an illusion of reality this sort of thing is merely ridiculous. Modern producers put themselves to all sorts of shifts to make good a presumed loss of the play's hold upon us. But Shakespeare's audience accepted the convention without difficulty, and Shakespeare himself made use of his liberty to suggest effects quite beyond our theatre's scope.

Shakespeare's Idea of Good Acting

He but suggested them. That must always be remembered. There are two passages in which he writes about the art he practised. The famous speech to the players in *Hamlet* tells us very positively what he thought good acting should be. And from the prologue to *Henry V* we may gather his opinion—it was the commonly received opinion—as to how his stage could represent the great happenings of history. When he wrote this he was already a dramatist of account.

> O! for a muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention;
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.

Notice that he does not cry; "O! for a better and more splendidly equipped theatre than this Globe." And that was by no means because such a thing was beyond his comprehension. The masques at Court employed more or less realistic scenery and, though Elizabeth had grown economical in her old age, her father had spent literally many thousands of pounds on the splendour of their equipment. But as it is the thing itself that is not obtainable for all his rhetoric, he goes on with a conventional apology for

> The flat unraised spirits that hath dared

[1] *Richard III* is an early play, and this is a remnant of Mediæval practice that Shakespeare does not repeat.

> On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
> So great an object; can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
> Within this wooden O [1] the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?

The answer obviously being "no," he goes on—

> O pardon! since a crooked figure may
> Attest in little place a million;
> And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
> On your imaginary forces work . . .
> Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts . . .
> Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
> Printing their proud hoofs in the receiving earth;
> For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
> Carry then here and there . . . .

"On your imaginary forces work." That, of course, is what all playwrights have to do, whatever help they may look for from scenic illusion. And Shakespeare seems to say—is it an unfair interpretation?—that since, when it comes to treating of great matters, we cannot approach the real thing, we may as well employ a little more imagination as a little less. At any rate it was upon this understanding that his audience would so piece out all such imperfections with their thoughts that he proceeded. Perforce, it may be said; but not therefore discontentedly. And not quite perforce. He could have left great matters alone. No such apology was felt needful for *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice,* with both of which he had had much success. But he had an audience that responded to these Histories, and would listen to the fine speeches in them literally by the hour, and he saw the chance they gave him.

Here indeed was another salient characteristic of that motley crowd that thronged the Elizabethan theatres and as significant a one as their devotion to fine verse. They were interested in great matters. Shakespeare had just made sure his footing

[1] The then Globe Theatre was either a circular structure (as rebuilt after the fire it was octagonal), or this is a jocular reference merely to its name.

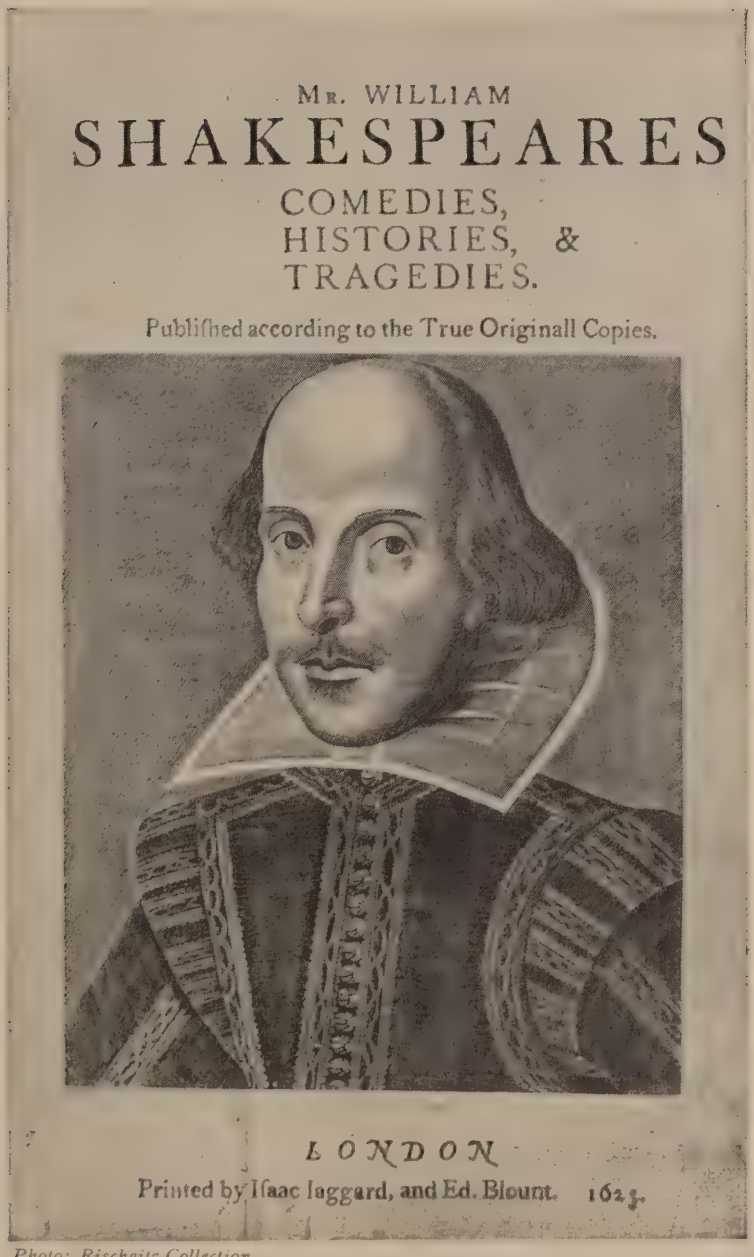

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE DROESHOUT SHAKESPEARE, FROM THE TITLE-PAGE, FIRST FOLIO, 1623 EDITION OF HIS WORKS

The most authentic portrait.

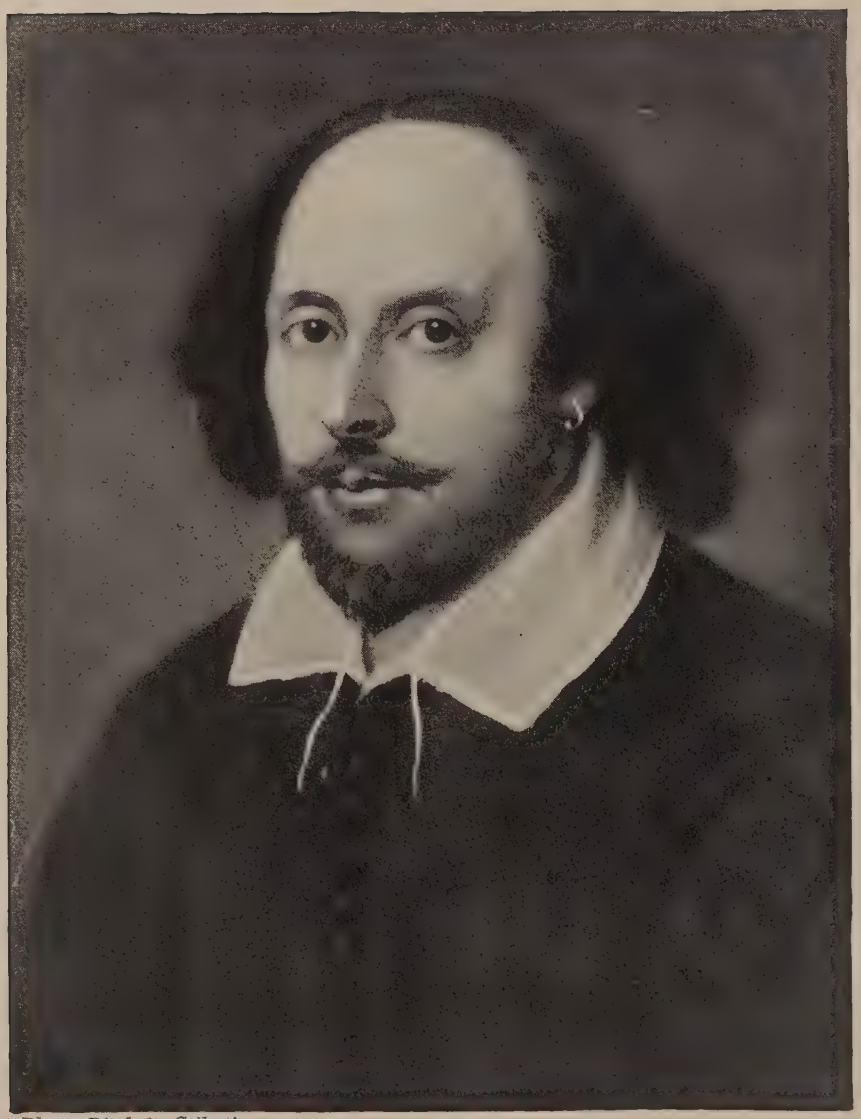

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE CHANDOS SHAKESPEARE

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Attributed to Richard Burbage or John Taylor.

as a dramatist by his re-shaping and enlivening of the three-parted *History of Henry VI;* crude stuff in a way, it is true, its alarums and excursions being apparently its chief popular recommendation. But in *Richard III* and *King John* he did better, in *Richard II* he "found himself"; and from then till, in *Antony and Cleopatra,* he wrote his last—and his greatest—of these dramas, the high themes of history gave him much of his best material.

The Use of the Soliloquy

And if this freedom to marshal symbolic armies and deal directly with great deeds gave these histories their power over the public, the convention which encouraged soliloquies and asides provided an intimacy of approach to the chief characters that was not less needed for the holding of the sympathy of an audience, to most of whom dead kings and half-legendary Roman conquerors were strange fowl indeed. The use of the soliloquy in Elizabethan stagecraft is—for our appreciation of the plays—perhaps the most important thing to understand. In modern drama the soliloquy is out of fashion. There is good reason for this. The picture stage aims at an illusion of reality, and upon it the most that a convention so formed will allow is an exclamation here and there, a few half-formed sentences. No dramatist will trouble much with such a broken weapon. And that the soliloquy cannot be made to suit the picture stage and its usage will be evident if we watch a play of Shakespeare's acted—as it never should be—in modern style. With two or three characters on the stage together there may seem nothing amiss unless it is that verse speaking sounds odd. But the moment a solitary figure begins to confide his thoughts very precisely to the emptiness around him the artistic temperature, so to speak, tends to fall. And if it were not that, as a rule, it is the chief actor who is thus burdened, the effect on the play would be perilous indeed. Hamlet's soliloquies, it is true, are

interesting matter in themselves; familiar too. A Viola is often, in herself, an attractive young lady to look at and listen to. While a Benedick or a Malvolio—no matter how strictly he may with his fellow actors have kept within the bounds of the picture stage—will, when confronted with a comic soliloquy, evade the convention, will tip us a wink, as it were. And we, being, quite rightly, unconcerned at that moment or any, with questions of technique, will not resent it.

But such half measures would not have done for Shakespeare or for any other Elizabethan dramatist. The soliloquy on that stage was a most valued resource. It was an obvious means of bringing the audience into quick sympathy with a character's secret mind. Moreover, when by artistic convention a man *may* talk to himself in set terms there is small limit to what he can be made to say. Thus it follows that some of the most revealing things in Shakespeare are to be found in the soliloquies. Further, the physical proximity of the actor to his audience, the absence of any barrier made by light and scenic illusion between them, drew the bond of sympathy—once the convention was accepted and being accepted forgotten—much closer. One need have no technical knowledge of the stage or the art of acting to be convinced of this.

Take one of the most passionate soliloquies in Shakespeare, that of Hamlet's which begins

> O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Imagine it spoken by a man, removed by art and artifice into another, a mimic world, whose features and form you must study, perhaps through an opera glass. You can be held by the sense of what he says, you may be moved to admiration by the beauty with which he says it. But any closer emotional relation with him is difficult to attain. The rest of your enjoyment you must seek and find for yourself in a general contemplation of the play.

But now suppose that man, that Prince Hamlet, to be so personally intimate with you that he is walking about the very room in which you are sitting. By convention you are invisible and he takes no more notice of you than he does—or than you try to—of the few hundred other people assembled. But there is no illusory barrier between you; he is even dressed much as you are. If it were not for the convention of your invisibility you could lean over and touch him.

Once accept this artistic situation as the Elizabethans, without question, did, and there can surely be no comparison between the sheer emotion stirred in us by a Hamlet in a world removed and a Hamlet so made one of us. It is hard for us now to accept it, in entirety probably impossible. And we have gained something doubtless by getting to a distance from our drama. We can be dispassionate about it—if that is a gain. Where true comedy is concerned, it is. But in emotional intimacy we have lost, and this was a thing the Elizabethans valued. The poetic drama must have moved them much as orchestral music can move us today, with no barrier of extra artifice between the sound and our hearing of it.

One more small trouble should be taken to make our path to Shakespeare smooth. Before setting out to see, or sitting down to read, a play, it will be worth while to master its glossary. The current usage of our tongue has changed since his day; besides, he took delight sometimes in words for the very sound of them, it would seem. And to be checked in the flow of one's enjoyment of a scene by a word that makes no meaning is like stumbling over a stone on a pleasant walk. And where a word is not a puzzle a strange phrase may be.

But it is easy to have in mind that when, in *As You Like It,* Duke Frederick is referred to as the humorous duke, the epithet implies that he is queer-tempered, not amusing. And when a little later Touchstone says that he'd rather bear with the footsore Rosalind than bear her, yet if he did bear her he

would bear no cross, as she has no money in her purse, though the joke is not much, if we remember the cross marked on our florins of today the line will at least sparkle for us as it is spoken, instead of falling flat.

The One-Sexed Stage

And one further circumstance of the Elizabethan stage is worth remarking, thereafter, practically, to ignore. No woman appeared upon it. Their parts were played by boys, skilled actors, promoted often from the companies of children whose popularity in the plays written for them often outdid their elders'. And such skilled actors were they, it would seem, that their usurpation had no crippling effect upon the drama. Are Juliet and Rosalind, Constance and Ophelia less womanly because of it? We may suppose, if we choose, that a keen, swift style of acting came most naturally to these youths. But this would be most suited to the plays. And Shakespeare, though he did not shirk the picturing of the sex relation, as it is horridly called—for did he not write Juliet, Isabella, Cleopatra?—never, it will be observed, emphasised any aspect of it which it would have been difficult for his boy actors to interpret. We also are spared, that is to say, and happily, any scenes of sensuous seduction. Even in *Antony and Cleopatra,* where one might think them unavoidable, the emphasis of the action in the scenes between the two is little upon this, but always upon Cleopatra's wit, her pretty petulance, her subtlety and charm of mind. And when the scenes of passion come, they are tragic scenes, lifted free of such fetters.

And in *Romeo and Juliet,* the love of the two is lyrical, ideal, and, though passionate enough, almost childishly passionate. Moreover, till they meet to die, they are alone and unseparated, but for one short—and tragic—scene of six speeches; Shakespeare has so contrived it.

We are not likely to restore the one-sexed stage. But it

is worth while to remember its existence, partly that we may note how its limitations were circumvented; but further—evidence of the true artist moulding his material—how they were turned to positive advantage. The free, high spirit of Shakespeare's women, his ignoring both of the cloying and the sordid side of their position, social and domestic, does owe something—paradoxical as this may seem—to his having had boys to play them.

Shakespeare's Plays and the English Theatre

These facts about the contemporary Shakespeare and his work having been brought to mind, and being now, if possible, packed away among the things we forget we know, our way is clear. Or rather, it should be clear. Nothing should be easier, that is to say, in this country which nourished his genius, to which he bequeathed its fruit, than to make first acquaintance with his plays by stepping into a theatre in any self-respecting city, expecting at one time or another, to find them being acted there. He was never tired of voicing his devotion to his country. Lip-service; but it was what he had best to give. England's devotion in these latter days to his memory and her care for his gift to her, has been lip-service indeed. This is not the place to enlarge upon the shameful fact that an Englishman may vainly wait a lifetime to see one of the less popular plays performed—unless he choose to cross to Germany and find it there. He may often travel the length and breadth of England for a month and not be able to see even the most inadequate performance of *As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Richard II, The Tempest, Macbeth* or *Othello.* London is the capital of a world empire which has no more famous spiritual citizen than William Shakespeare. And the plays are the man. Some recent years have passed there with not one of them put upon the accepted stage, many a year with but two or three. If a foreigner asks—and it is a thing that innocent and intelligent foreigners are apt to do

—to be taken to the National Theatre to see a play by the great national poet, his request must leave us tongue-tied. For what excuse have we that he would comprehend? Well, when Englishmen want a theatre where Shakespeare can be honoured in the one obvious way of keeping his work worthily alive upon its stage, they can have it. Meanwhile England, in this matter, is a laughing stock.

One word, however, must be said upon such performances as are in general to be seen. Shakespeare's plays, little enough in use by the English Theatre of today, have in the past been much misused by it, and often are so still. There are reasons for this, if not good excuse. The suppression of the theatre by the Puritans for twenty years, and the particular reaction that followed, tended to destroy the true tradition of their acting. The fashions of play-writing and the physical development of the theatres themselves from 1660 to 1800 were against a right understanding of their methods or a respect for their text. In the eighteenth century inconceivable liberties were taken with them even by their sincere devotees. Garrick cut and re-arranged and re-wrote them. He gave *Romeo and Juliet* a happy ending, and changed *Cymbeline* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* almost beyond recognition. *The Merchant of Venice* was mangled by a certain Lord Lansdowne, and Colley Cibber wrote a version of *Richard III* which held the stage in preference to Shakespeare till but a few years ago; still holds it possibly. Not only this, but the literary editors—beginning with Nicholas Rowe in 1710—took upon themselves to supplement the text with descriptions of scenes which, being for some unfathomed reason still retained in standard editions, are looked on by the casual reader as directions for scenery. He finds "Venice; a street," "Belmont; a room in Portia's house," or "The forest of Arden"; then "Another part of the forest" and "Another part of the forest" and yet "Another part of the forest." This visualisation was presumed to be a help in reading. But association of all

drama with the cumberings of the scenic stage has made it misleading in the extreme. For in most, if not all, of Shakespeare's plays, as we have seen, the actors came upon the bare stage—were even, in a sense, supposed to be coming there and nowhere else—and with his verse and their acting did the rest. If then the reader is now brought to divide his attention between Rosalind and Orlando and his own picturing of the forest of Arden or—as is likelier and worse—some half conscious vision of pretty painted scenery, he will lose more than he gains, for he will be but half caught in the intensity of the spell by which Shakespeare wove into his verse *all* that he needed for the making of his play, plot, character, scenery, everything.

And from this false inheritance the modern English theatre has but begun to shake free. There are still producers who persuade themselves that they may cut whole scenes or rearrange them and the play take no harm. They would not exactly argue perhaps, that Shakespeare did not know his business as a playwright. But, driven to choose between his play's construction and the construction of their scenery, they fancy that the public must prefer more scenery and less play; and the mangling of the play they are confident no one will trouble about. There are still actors who cling to "traditional" readings and "traditional" business, though the tradition is but an accumulation of the time of Shakespeare's most shameless maltreatment. No doubt it is hard for a Richard III to be robbed of Colley Cibber's flamboyant "Off with his head! So much for Buckingham," if that is the sort of vision he has of his Richard. A famous actor-manager of recent years could not resist ruining the tender and most characteristic end of the scene between Benedick and Beatrice—

> Go, comfort your cousin; I must say she is dead; and so farewell.

with the ridiculous

> Benedick, kill Claudio; kill him dead.
> As sure as he's alive I will.

But that is an incidental sort of folly. Far worse is the treatment of entire characters which — as, for instance, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—reduces Doctor Caius to a pantaloon and the scene of the duel to a football scrimmage. Nor need anyone seeing *Twelth Night* and discovering Sir Andrew Ague-cheek to be the village idiot and Sir Toby Belch remarkable for nothing but a sustained attempt to justify his surname, imagine that Shakespeare has given any countenance to such witless buffoonery.

It is, after all, not so easy then, for the Englishman to approach his Shakespeare—his by rights, for all that he does not enforce them—by the natural way of seeing the plays appropriately acted. And indeed these obstacles—this accumulation of rubbish in the courts of the temple—do sufficiently and almost excusably account for the scholastic heresy by which the printed book ousts the living drama. Fortunately there has been a re-action among scholars themselves. Much good work has been done lately—the present writer is in debt to it—upon the practice of the Elizabethan stage. And that most distinguished of critics, Mr. A. C. Bradley, in his *Shakespearean Tragedy,* admitting that the study of Shakespeare as a playwright has been somewhat neglected, exalts those unscholarly lovers who "read a play more or less as if they were actors who had to study all the parts" and proceeds in his own most scholarly criticism to prove himself, in imagination, at least, as fine a Shakespearean actor as Shakespeare himself could have hoped for.

Moreover, the treatment of Shakespeare in our schools has changed, vastly for the better. Boys are no longer so apt to be set down to construe *Hamlet* as if it were the *Æneid.* The methods of that somewhat maligned pedagogue, Mr. Squeers, are being reconsidered; "W-i-n-d-e-r! And when he knows what it is, he goes and cleans it!" Schoolmasters have succeeded in persuading their authorities that, even though the children *do*

Photo: F. W. Burford.
By courtesy of B. J. Simmons & Co., Ltd., Costumiers, London.

MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER AS "KING HENRY VIII."

King Henry. Read over this:
And after, this; and then to breakfast with
What appetite you have.

King Henry VIII, Act. III, Scene 2.

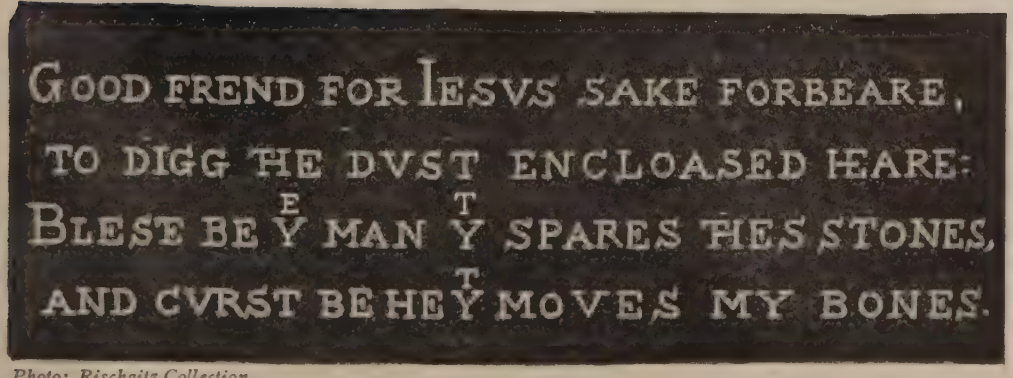
GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLESE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,
AND CVRST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

INSCRIPTION ON THE STONE OVER SHAKESPEARE'S GRAVE, STRATFORD-ON-AVON CHURCH

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Birmingham.*

"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW," BY SIR JOHN GILBERT, R.A.

Petruchio. You logger-headed and unpolish'd grooms.
Taming of the Shrew, Act IV, Scene 1.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

PLAY SCENE FROM "HAMLET," AFTER MACLISE

Hamlet. He poisons him i' the garden for's estate.
Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2.

enjoy it, they learn more about *Henry V* by shouting their way once through it, than they will in the course of a whole term's unadulterated desk work. Even this leaves out of account the sheer value of the Histories as vivid lessons in history. Indeed, if one can hope to find anywhere today the pristine enthusiasm of that Elizabethan audience for the great tales of the world so told to them, it will be in a schoolroom.

Failing a good theatre, and even to re-inforce it, there is perhaps no better way of approach to the mature appreciation one aims for, than this early familiarity with the plays as acting exercises—to phrase it no higher. By it one surmounts without question the stumbling block of Elizabethan stagecraft which we, in this essay, have been at some pains to negotiate—one takes this in one's stride, so to say. And though the æsthetic gain is one of promise, no more, yet, in later years one may get to see or to read Julius Cæsar, and find that the memory of a gawky boy, gesticulating like a semaphore to a bullet-headed, short-jacketed Brutus, as he exclaims "Ye gods, ye gods! must I endure all this?" far from flavouring the great scene ridiculously, lends it more life.

But Shakespeare the playwright is Shakespeare the poet too, and as poet we may well try to get into intimate touch with him. Admit even that as poet he does transcend the mere theatre; no harm in that, once we have planted for ourselves the less supernal aspect of him quite firmly there.

§ 1

Educational Value of Shakespeare

If an innocent and intelligent foreigner, above referred to, came to ask how, lacking everything but the "book of the words," he could best compass a general appreciation of Shakespeare, what plan could we make for him? Or if a student, setting his mind free of all the casual and particular knowledge of the subject which must be tied up with any English education, were

to want to start again free of it, what could we recommend? Not, certainly, a haphazard dipping into that close printed, crowded volume that is commonly labelled "Shakespeare," not even the choice of a masterpiece or two. Let us make a list to fit this particular purpose.

A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Romeo and Juliet.
Henry IV. Parts I and II.
Twelfth Night.
Julius Cæsar.
Macbeth.

That is a chronological list, almost. *Romeo and Juliet,* for reasons that will appear is out of place. It takes us through all the "periods" of his writing but the last. Though it does not give us Shakespeare in his every mood, it follows the clear steps by which he ascended in his art. *Hamlet* is the notable omission. But *Hamlet* is in many ways unique—as a play, and as one of Shakespeare's plays—and is better considered alone. *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are colossal; let them be read separately too. *Othello* might have replaced *Macbeth;* in the smaller sense it is a better play, in the larger one a lesser.

But the list only aims at such an approach to Shakespeare as will let us later feel instantly familiar with his work and thought wherever we touch it. Then, if we want entertainment and little more, we can take up *The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It,* or *Much Ado about Nothing.* If our turn is for history, there is *Richard II, Richard III,* or *Henry V.* And being quite familiar with our Shakespeare, we can try him in his harsher mood with *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida,* taste the beauty and mark the liveliness of his prentice work in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors,* and take our ease with him—as he took his somewhat in the writing of them—with *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tem-*

pest. And even then, there'll be a masterpiece and some half-masterpieces left.

How to Read the Plays

And after *what* to read comes—for this limited purpose—*how.* Here is a suggestion which may involve the student—and even more the innocent and intelligent foreigner—in a little trouble. Read each play for the first time aloud, as if it were simply music. The plan may involve a forbearing audience or a sound-proof room, but in the result it is worth the conquering of whatever self-consciousness may stand in the way. It is not that the sound of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is as important as the sense, or should be or can be divorced from the sense. To say so would be simply perverse. But it is simply true that to divorce the sense from the sound is equivalent to transcribing such a lyric as Shelley's "Skylark" into prose.

And it is not enough for the student of Shakespeare to admit this in theory. In these days of novels and newspapers reading has become a semi-automatic business with most of us; the eye, that is to say, is accustomed to transmit, at a glance, the meaning of whole sentences to the brain. The words are telescoped into phrases and the sound of the words stays unaccounted for. This must be hard on all poetry; to dramatic poetry it is death. For the dramatist writes to be spoken, and his art is to make the tune and the time of the speeches as indicative of the character as their sense must be. The sound of a speech may sometimes be made to express far more than it would be dramatically right for its sense to convey. So much is as true in detail of prose. In poetic drama far more is involved. The play's whole temper must be influenced—is apt to be determined—by the sort of verse employed. And contrast between character and character, scene and scene, things vital both to content and form, is largely gained by the manœuvring as much of the sound as of the sense. Shakespeare sometimes does this obviously, by

a shift from verse to prose, or by the use of rhymed couplets to end a scene.[1] In his maturity he makes far subtler use of it, to mark changes in the play's mood and to paint individual character. And to miss these efforts is to miss not only their beauty but even perhaps to be misled in the play's meaning, when this hangs on their significance. So as our modern habits of reading favour the omission to notice them, we must force them into notice, however unreasonable the process may seem.

But, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* at least, the process will be nothing but a pleasant one. Set a child to read it through in a high, clear voice, shut your ears to the sense if you could, and open them to the sound, and it is hardly delusive to say that you could divine as much sheer music in it as in a Mozart symphony. But of course the meaning is so simple, so clear, so innately wedded to the words, that it will not be missed. For all that though, there are passages that must first impress your hearing; if we let them in by any other door the beauty can never be the same.

> . . . O happy fair
> Your eyes are lodestars! and your tongue sweet air,
> More tuneable to lark than shepherd's ear
> When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.

Sound and sense are wedded, the sense is simple. But shut your eyes and speak it aloud—in one of London's November fogs, in the hot tropics, among New England snows—and, by sound and sense combined, do you not touch the soul of an English Spring?

Read the duet that begins

> Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
> Could ever hear by tale or history,
> The course of true love never did run smooth . . .

[1] The rhymed tag was also a conventional indication of an act's end. Shakespeare is inconsistent in this use of it. But he often makes it serve him well when he needs a scene to finish brilliantly.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "LADY MACBETH"

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

[illegible] Gallery, London

It is charming. But one must read it as a duet and imagine the two voices blending, or the full charm is lost when the first fairy voice is heard

> Over hill, over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough brier,
> Over park, over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire
> I do wander everywhere
> Swifter than the moone's sphere.

The trip of the verse must be light and right; and the soft treble

> Swifter than the moone's sphere

must be bird-like.

Hark to the sound of Oberon's fantastic anger

> Tarry, rash wanton! am I not thy lord?

and to Titania's preposterous jealousy of

> . . . the bouncing Amazon
> Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love.

How the dainty thing spits it at him!

Listen to the gentle weariness of Lysander's

> Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood,
> And to speak troth, I have forgot our way;
> We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
> And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Taste the mischievous vigour of Puck's

> Up and down, up and down,
> I will lead them up and down.
> I am feared in field and town.
> Goblin, lead them up and down.

There's nothing particular in that bit of jingle, one may

say, except that it happens to be poetically and dramatically precisely right for its purpose. Listen again when the brisk hunting horns break into the "still" fairy music and disperse the mists of the dream—to the heroic notes of Hippolyta's

> I was with Hercules and Cadmus once
> When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
> With hounds of Sparta; never did I hear
> Such gallant chiding; for besides the groves,
> The skies, the fountains, every region near
> Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
> So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

And then the deeper tone of Theseus

> My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
> So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
> With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
> Crook-knee'd and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
> Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
> Each under each.

And above all—just because he is called a comic character—do not miss the simplicity and charm of Bottom's immortal

> Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that it will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again."

Having taught our ears due observance of the tunes and harmonies, the shifts of time and key between speech and speech and scene and scene (though one must not press these parallels too far), nothing stands between us and the easiest enjoyment of the play. The archaisms are few, and though the fun of the rustic interlude is (unhappily) not so immediate for us as it was to the Elizabethans, we need not miss the spirit of it if we look for no more than it offers, if we shake free from that disastrous modern town-bred habit of supposing that a country clown and a circus clown are the same.

§ 2

"A Midsummer Night's Dream"

Shakespeare wrote nothing more perfect of its kind than *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* One might indeed say—and defend the position—that he wrote nothing so perfect. And he wrote nothing more of its kind, for *Love's Labour's Lost,* its true companion, is an earlier work. The perfection of the play lies in the fact that its subject and substance and method are so suited. Its inspiration is lyrical and no touch of the main story and no character is too heavy for a lyric to bear. Theseus, the classic hero, is a figment, but he is meant to be. Hippolyta is a shadow of anything the name suggests. They are there only to heighten the romance of the lovers in the wood, and to add dignity to the wedding—which was more than the play's end in the sense that the play itself was assuredly written for the celebration of some great wedding feast. Was there ever such a party given! And the four lovers are not much more substantial or complex in character than the fairy king and queen; rightly, for it is all a fairy play.

We pass now to *Romeo and Juliet.* This is earlier work and, for all its beauties, cruder work. And the conventions of its emotional expression will often be strange to us; we shall need to make allowance for them.

"Romeo and Juliet"

Note the effect of the opening scene; the progression from the comic prose of the quarrelling servants to the Prince's sounding verse. In a few hundred words Shakespeare gives us the family feud at full pitch, the men, the masters and their wives, and Verona's own share in the trouble. Mark how, even before this, the very first words of the chorus strike for us the keynote of the play.

> Two households, both alike in dignity,
> In Fair Verona . . .

A piece of technique that Shakespeare learned early and never lost, to put his auditors upon the right track of scene and character, without delay. But the whole story, helped by the verse, seems to move swiftly and easily, the first act culminating in the charming action of the dance and closing with the perfect passage after Romeo has been recognised—we must picture as we read it the maskers departing with their torches,[1] and the two figures left alone:

Juliet. My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is in me
That I must love a loathed enemy.

Nurse. What's this, what's this?

Juliet. A rime I learn'd even now
Of one I danc'd withal.
(*One calls within, "Juliet."*)

Nurse. Anon, anon!
Come, let's away; the strangers all are gone.

Nothing in this first act need strike the most "modern" of us as strange, unless it be the fantasy of the talk in the scenes between Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio, and their extreme addiction to punning. But we must remember that—apart from such talk being dramatically suited to Romeo's self-conscious humour—this was all in the literary, if not in the actual conversational fashion of the day (for people who were quick enough to indulge in it). And puns were not then in discredit. They were not thought of as poor jokes, or even as jokes at all. The English language was, to cultured Elizabethans, like a new-found and wonderful inheritance. And they revelled in it, they sported with it in every conceivable way. But it did not occur to them—until the game wore thin—that they were degrading it by doing so.

[1] Modern editions, with no authority from the Folio, mark their "exeunt" 10 lines or so too early, and spoil the effect. Modern producers, however, generally show more sense.

oto: W. A. Mansell & Co.
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"PRINCE ARTHUR AND HUBERT," BY W. F. YEAMES, R.A.

Arthur. O, spare mine eyes,
Though to no use but still to look on you!
King John, Act IV, Scene 1.

Photo: W. & D. Downey.

FORBES ROBERTSON AS "OTHELLO"

Othello. Yet she must die else she'll betray more men.
Othello, Act V, Scene 2.

Photo: L. Caswall Smith. *After the painting by Mrs. Jopling Rowe.*

ELLEN TERRY AS "PORTIA"

Portia. Tarry a little; there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.
Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

Photo: Daily Mirror Studio.
By courtesy of B. J. Simmons & Co., Ltd. Costumiers, London.

SIR H. BEERBOHM TREE AS "MACBETH"

Macbeth. Speak, if you can: what are you?
Macbeth, Act I, Scene 3.

They played upon words romantically, emotionally. Shakespeare seems to have wearied of the practice very soon; he probably found the dramatic effect too superficial for him. But even in his maturer work puns may be found.[1]

It is however later on in the play that these conventions most affect our modern sense of literary propriety. A play upon ideas we can reconcile with the genuine expression of emotion. Juliet's

> And learn me how to lose a winning match

is not disturbing. But, a few lines later, her

> Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but I
> And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more
> Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice;
> I am not I, if there be such an I;
> Or those eyes shut that make thee answer I.
> If he be slain, say "I", or if not, no;
> Brief sounds determine of my weal or woe.

does perhaps make it hard for us to be as sympathetic as we'd like to be. Romeo, under the same strain of emotion, tends to drop his juggling. But even he, close upon—

> . . . more courtship lives
> In carrion flies than Romeo; they may seize
> On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,

must add

> Flies may do this, but I from this must fly.

It is noticeable though, how, as the tragedy develops, Shakespeare's grasp is firmer. Take the scene of parting, which begins

> Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day.

[1] Now is it Rome indeed and room enough
Julius Cæsar, Act I.

And—though modern taste likes to dispute it—Lady Macbeth's
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt.

Compare it with the balcony scene. The hall-mark of genius in that (incidentally, it is the hall-mark, too, of the lovers' true love) lies not in its much-quoted rhetorical beauties, but—to the present writer's mind—in the simplicity of the last twenty-five lines.

Juliet. Romeo!
Romeo. My dear.
Juliet. Ah, what o'clock tomorrow
Shall I send to thee?
Romeo. At the hour of nine.
Juliet. I will not fail; 'tis twenty years till then.
I have forgot why I did call thee back.
Romeo. Let me stand here till thou remember it.
Juliet. I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Remembering how I love thy company.
Romeo. And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget.
Forgetting any other home but this.

And so, perfectly, to the end. And, when they part, the lyric note is still sounded, the themes are the same—sun, moon, and the song of birds—but they are transformed. The tone of the verse is deeper, its measure firmer and slower, and the speeches turn always to reality:

I must be gone and live or stay and die.

The reckless

Therefore stay yet; thou needst not to be gone.
How is't, my soul? Let's talk, it is not day.

But

O! now be gone; more light and light it grows.

And from now on Shakespeare plays with words for their own sake and no more. There is the pathetic little passage between Juliet and Romeo, in which she tries to mask her misery by

joining in the usual game of equivoque; but that has its dramatic purpose. And in the Juliet, told by the nurse to marry Paris, the Juliet of —

> Speakest thou from thy heart?
> *Nurse.* And from my soul too;
> Or else beshrew them both.
> *Juliet.* Amen!
> *Nurse.* What?
> *Juliet.* Well, thou hast comforted me marvellous much. . . .

Shakespeare has found out "how to do it."

Even more remarkable, from the point of view of his art's development, is the Romeo of the last act, and the means by which the figure is given its tragic stature. For the first time Shakespeare makes free use of the irony which was to serve his genius so well in maturer work. The act opens with a stroke of it. The scene in the tomb. Romeo's bitter embracing of the still living Juliet, supposing her dead, his own death in her arms, is the most tragic irony. And touches like

> Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight.

and even the more didactic lines to the apothecary

> There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls

are dramatic master-strokes. Above all, from the point of view of Shakespeare's art, we should notice Romeo's reception of the news of Juliet's supposed death:

> Is it e'en so? then I defy you, stars!

That is the maturest touch in the play. Shakespeare has mastered in that the secret of making the unspoken thing count with the spoken. No need to tell the actor what to do. He has but to reach the right expression of those nine words by legitimate means, and in doing so he will have silently conveyed a

page of phrased emotion—and as no phrasing could convey it. Years later he paralled this effect in *Macbeth* with

> She should have died hereafter,
> There would have been a time for such a word.

Apart from its beauties and charm, which hold us today as they held the first audiences (for the play was a great success), there is much else of interest to the student in *Romeo and Juliet.* Shakespeare's own discovery, for instance, of Mercutio. The famous "Queen Mab" speech is an attractive bit of decorative writing; but it might have been allotted to anyone. Mercutio's death scene, however, is quite another matter. The very ineptitudes of the play are interesting. But fine strokes and ineptitudes both, the most interesting thing is to discover them for ourselves.

§ 3

The Historical Plays

We must give but a very few words to the two Histories on our list, for the topic will so easily widen beyond our compass. They are Shakespeare's most individual contributions to this then very popular dramatic form. The three parts of *Henry VI* were but in part—and possibly in very small part—his. In *Richard III* the influence of his collaborator is still strong with him. *Richard II* and *King John* are all his own, and he does what perhaps no other writer could have done with them, but what he does is what other writers would probably have attempted. But for the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V,* though he took what was indeed a recognised pattern for such plays, he so invigorated it as to give it quite new significance. The great dramatic virtue of these plays is that they not only tell the historical tale of great events, but that they picture the life and mind of common folk in relation to them. And the centre of this achievement, of course, is the figure of Falstaff.

Like most of the great figures of fiction, he grew startlingly under his creator's hand.[1] From the Falstaff of Gadshill (good as he is) to the philosopher of the speech upon honour and of the scenes and soliloquies of Part II, is a genius's journey. It is by no means a bad plan, as a preliminary, to read the Falstaff scenes through by themselves. Then when in the midst of the pageant of events we have to imagine the huge figure come rolling on the stage, it may the more readily strike us with that friendly familiarity which the good actor can embody. It helps us, too, to resist the temptation—having once yielded to it—to skip the long screeds of verse in Part II in favour of Falstaff's next appearance. It is worth remarking how well Shakespeare himself kept him in hand. He is brought to the fringe of the serious business of the play, but except in one instance, not entangled in it. And the one instance—when he maltreats the dead body of Hotspur—is an artistic blemish that has been the bane of many a producer of the play.

It is superfluous to praise Falstaff. He says of himself that he is not only witty but the cause of wit in other men. We may enlarge his meaning. He is an idea of humour personified. He is the revelation of a natural force. The least Falstaffian of us have a share in him; or, if we have not, so much the worse for our humanity. And here, perhaps, is the point of Prince Hal's relations to him, his function in that aspect of the two plays. The paradox of Prince Hal has been much canvassed; he has been as big a worry to Shakespeare's commentators as he was to his own father. How could he keep such company, say the Puritans! And, having had his fun with Falstaff, say the moralists, how could he treat him so scurvily! The answer seems

[1] Don Quixote, Pickwick. Strange to think that in England and in Spain within five years of each other Shakespeare and Cervantes should be apostrophising chivalry by means of two such antithetical figures. This has been, no doubt, often enough remarked upon and, almost certainly, though not to the present writer's knowledge, the comparison widened to embrace Spanish and English reactions in general to these dying ideals and the new mind that each nation made for itself. An attractive subject.

simple, and it is perhaps the simpler to make it because we need not suppose that either questions or answers on these points ever occurred to Shakespeare himself—ever occurred, that is to say, as abstractions. The dramatist's answer to "How could he have done it?" is "He did." But survey the "sympathetic" scheme of the play (so to call it) and its adjustment.

We have Henry IV, troubled by the thought of the "by-paths and indirect, crook'd ways" by which he met his crown, clashing with Hotspur and Northumberland, who excuse their rebellion on those very grounds. And Henry mourns his son is not a Hotspur

> To pluck bright honor from the pale-fac'd moon

but instead, matched to

> . . . Such inordinate and low desires . . .
> Such barren pleasures, rude society.

What can his future be?

Hotspur is a brilliant character and most brilliantly done. He is the driving force of the first part of the play. The scenes with his father and uncle, with his wife, with Glendower are magnificent. "This tune goes manly" (to quote a later play) indeed. But Shakespeare can't quite love him. He is allowed little unsympathetic traits. He'd

> . . . rather be a kitten and cry 'mew'
> Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.

And then, when the pinch comes! His father is "grievous sick."

> Zounds! how has he the leisure to be sick
> In such a justling time!

And for all his chivalry he despises Prince Harry. He resents and disbelieves the story of his reformation. He is jealous of him, he asks if the challenge to single combat was made "in contempt." And his last words before they do fight are

I can no longer brook thy vanities.

But note Prince Harry's over his dead body:

. . . Fare thee well, great heart!
Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough; this earth, that bears thee dead
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.

And then—but then!—when he sees the supposed corpse of old Falstaff, the lecher, the wine-bibber, the coward:

. . . Poor Jack, farewell,
I could have better spar'd a better man.

It is quite clear, surely. Shakespeare means charity, and what we call common humanity, to win.[1]

And finally—to be done with this aspect of the play—when Henry takes on himself the crown, he takes it sadly. He is dreadfully sincere with his father.

Accusing it, I put it on my head
To try with it, as with an enemy
That had, before my face, murder'd my father,
The quarrel of a true inheritor.
But if it did infect my blood with joy
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride;
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine
Did with the least affection of a welcome
Give entertainment to the might of it,
Let God for ever keep it from my head
And make me as the poorest vassal is
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it!

With no self-righteousness in his heart, indeed, Henry V must pass into a world where good-fellowship can count for little,

[1] The historical question is neither here nor there. Shakespeare did not desert history, but he moulded his characters to fit it.

a grimmer and unkinder world. But he'll play his part there as it is written for him. Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage," his constant comparison of life to the mimic life of the theatre, was not an idle one. There is, of course, much else to note about these twin plays. In general, they are written, it would seem, upon a flowing tide of success (not worldly success—though that they brought—but success in artistry) and confidence. The verse flows smoothly. Bombast (that sign in so sensitive a writer as Shakespeare of strain and anxiety) has vanished. In fact the bombastic Glendower is a figure of fun. Pistol is one of nature's burlesques, and even Northumberland (in Part II, Act i) is accused upon very small provocation of indulging in "strained passion."

Structural Balance of the Plays

Shakespeare is now attending carefully to the structural balance of his plays, and—as we have seen—to the sympathetic balance too. Henry IV is not let die on the stage; it would give him too tragic an importance. Prince Henry is carefully kept clear of all connection with the scandalous treachery by which Lancaster and Westmoreland dispose of the Archbishop's rebellion. In that scene (Part II, Act iv, sc. 2) note the convention of time which Shakespeare naturally adopts. An army is dispersed in three minutes, just as Capulet's ball consisted of one dance and no more.

Innumerable details are worth remarking, and are most interesting to search out. Almost at random:—The evidence that Falstaff was always on the point of escaping from his creator's hands, such life had he given him. At the end of Part I it looks as if Shakespeare meant to reform him.

> If I do grow great, I'll grow less; for I'll purge and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do.

And the Epilogue to Part II promises us more of him than *Henry V* fulfils.

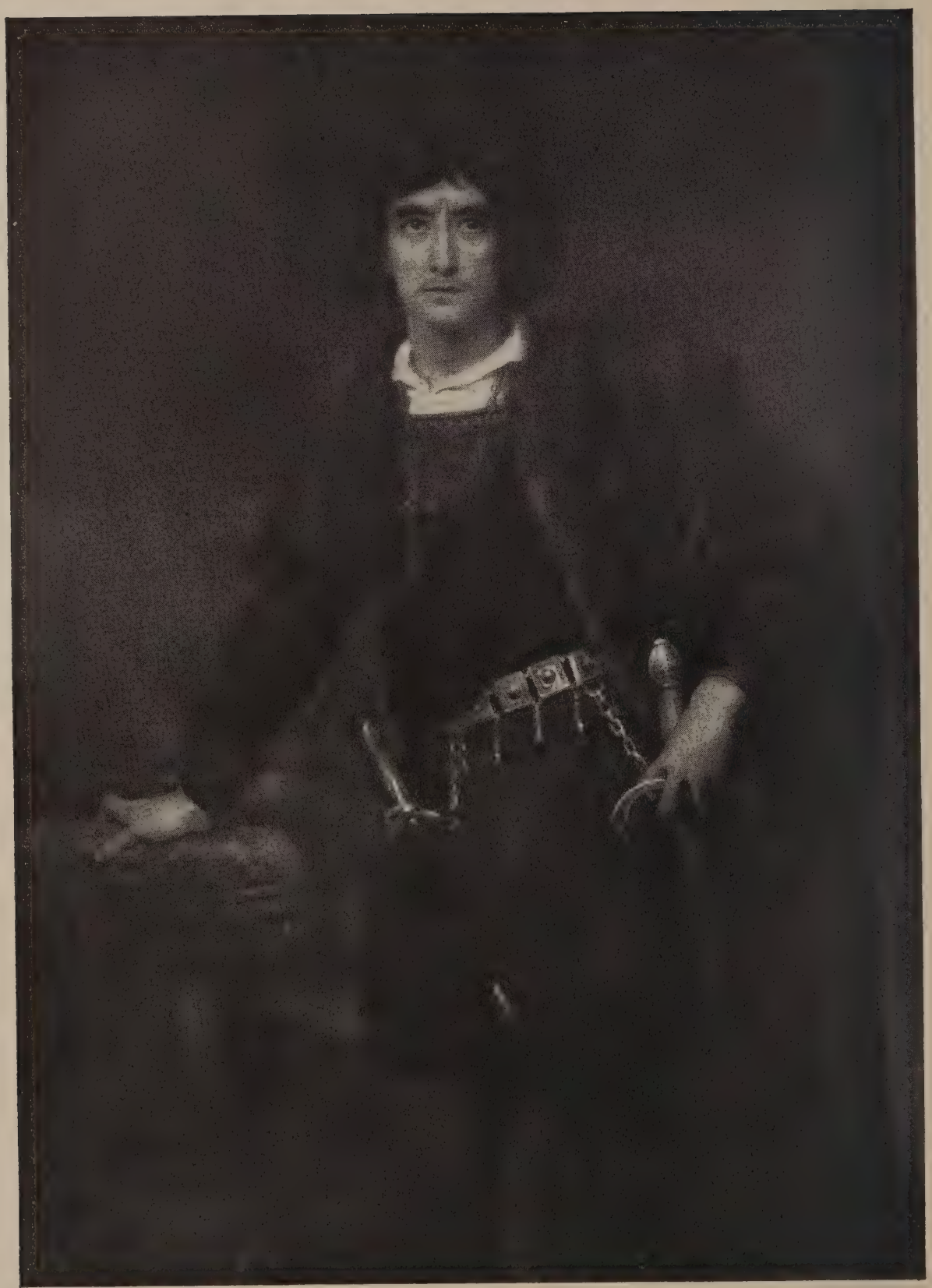
Photo: Henry Dixon & Son. *From the painting by the Hon. John Collier.*

SIR H. BEERBOHM TREE AS FALSTAFF, AND MISS ELLEN TERRY AND MRS. KENDAL AS "THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR"

Falstaff. I love thee, and none but thee: help me away; let me creep in here.—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act III, Scene 3.

From the painting by Chas. A. Buchel. *By permission of Mr. A. Bourchier.*

MR. A. BOURCHIER AS SHYLOCK IN "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"



From the painting by Edwin Long, R.A.

SIR HENRY IRVING AS "HAMLET"

To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub.
Hamlet, Act III, Scene I.

Ancient Pistol is not only one of nature's burlesques but is he not (unintenionally, quite possibly) an outrageous burlesque of Hotspur?

A quite important matter to notice is how the story of *Richard II* is kept alive throughout the two plays, and how the ending of each—especially the unconventional end of Part II—is contrived to carry us over to the interest of the plays to come.

The comedy is full of topical allusions, some of which are easy to master, some of which must escape us. We can never hope to laugh at the Falstaff scenes quite as the Elizabethans did. But just a little trouble will help us with

Falstaff. Where's Bardolph?

Page. He's gone into Smithfield to buy your worship a horse [i. e. to the meat market—or to the knackers].

Falstaff. I bought him in Paul's [In the nave of St. Paul's servants used to wait for hire, idlers, rufflers, and pickpockets too] and he'll buy me a horse in Smithfield; an I could get me but a wife in the stews, I were manned, horsed, and wived.

And—for the pick of the scenes—for the pick of all such scenes in Shakespeare—what is there to touch the arrest of Falstaff, the pricking of the recruits and the dinner at Shallow's house? What can beat Dame Quickly's description of Falstaff sitting in her Dolphin chamber, or Doll Tearsheet's apostrophe to him,

Thou whoreson little tidy Bartholomew boar-pig,

Shallow's mourning for old Double, Davy's defence of that arrant knave Visor,

I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle,

or

Puff! Puff in thy teeth most recreant coward base,

and

Master Shallow. I owe you a thousand pound?

Heavens, how the thing lives!

§ 4

Twelfth Night and *Julius Cæsar* were probably written and, rather more certainly, produced within a year of each other (1599–1600). *Twelfth Night* is the last of the three mature comedies. It seems to have been, alike from its title and from a certain carelessness in its composition, an "occasional" piece—just as, presumably, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was—and it is guessed that, upon the success of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It,* Shakespeare was commanded to write the play, to be performed, as custom prescribed, before Queen Elizabeth upon "Twelfth Day at night."

"Twelfth Night"

Choosing a modern epithet, one might well describe *Twelfth Night* as the most charming of the plays. It shows great forthrightness in the writing. Shakespeare has found a good story and he sets it out with practised clarity. But the earlier scenes are detached and rather thin. It is not till Viola and Olivia meet that he really grapples with his theme. One might even pitch upon the very line that lifts the play into life, Viola's

> I see you what you are, you are too proud.

It at least lifts Viola into a proud position among the heroines of drama. Shakespeare has found what every dramatist wants in a play and a scene, contrast of circumstance, clash of temperament. Here is Olivia, the exquisite, disdainful creature, pampered with everything the world can give, but cloistered and unadvised, and a child in the world's ways. And here is Viola, shipwrecked in every meaning of the word, with the heartbreak of a hopeless love to add to all other troubles, facing the wide world with courage, with a pathetic merriment. The obvious situation in which the girl is sent to be a wooer for the man she herself loves, is good enough, but how it is transcended in its

playing out by such characters! Viola never fails her creator, nor he her. With Olivia, the story lands him in difficulties, or rather, perhaps, it is his carelessness with this aspect of the story that does so. Character and circumstance can account for her impulsive wooing of Orsino, which begins well enough, but degenerates into a repetition of effects, and ends far too mechanically with the hurried marriage to Sebastian. Orsino suffers even more. Shakespeare makes him, and manages to keep him, a fine figure for the best part of two acts. It is true that he is, as one says, a bit of a stick, a shade too self-conscious, but placed, poor man, towards the audience in a false position. Nevertheless Shakespeare could have done more with him; moreover, it is likely, meant to do more. The lines in the last act about "The Egyptian thief at point of death" seem to be what remains of the fine tragical scenes that were to have been written for him, desperately rounded up to make a timely end of the play.

For the fact is that Shakespeare found the comic characters of his invention better worth than the story he started with. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Malvolio, Feste, Fabian, and Maria, the comedy set in the fantastic gloom of Oliver's household; this gives the play its most characteristic colour and life. It needs no analysis, comment on it seems superfluous. The humour carries us along upon a tide of laughter, a tide so strong that it sweeps Orsino aside, as we've noticed, Olivia at times into a half-regarded corner, and would tend to swamp even Viola if Shakespeare did not contrive to catch her in the fun.[1]

If Malvolio had not been a puritan he would have come very near indeed to being a tragic figure. Even as it is, Shakespeare's theatrical prejudices and his creator's conscience towards the thing he has given life to seem in the last two acts to have a bit of a tussle.

[1] In many modern productions, though, the undue and unnecessary elaboration of the comic scenes makes the disproportion of the play far worse than it is left by Shakespeare's own miscalculation.

Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?

That was his doom to mockery and the mad-house. Shakespeare tactfully confuses this issue, even as he, it may be guessed, placated the Censor by substituting an apostrophe to Jove for a too familiar address to a more Christian deity.[1] But the whole intention is left plain.

The play is peppered with allusions more or less topical. Of some we must miss the point. What lies in that occult

The lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe

who shall say? And probably there was for the Elizabethan audience a sting in Sir Toby's

Nay, if you be an undertaker I'm for you

which it lacks for us. But the fact that Sir Andrew is a knight

dubbed with unhatched rapier and on carpet consideration

need not pass us by. And when we hear he has

the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria

if he but skips as he says it, we need not even mentally translate it into fox-trot to enjoy our laugh.

Such a happy crew as they are! Truly, Sir Toby, the old ruffian, does get drunk of a morning. We may like to believe that if it weren't for that sunstroke he had compaigning, his head would be stronger. For he's not all sot. He stands up to Antonio, a formidable customer. We may wish, indeed, that he had not been dear to Sir Andrew "some two thousand strong or so," and even more that he did not turn on the poor innocent in the end with his

Ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull.

[1] A later hand than Shakespeare's may have done this. The play did not see print for 23 years.

© *Sarony*

MARY ANDERSON AS "HELENA"

© *White Studios*

JANE COWL AS "JULIET"

EDWIN BOOTH AS "HAMLET"

© *Francis Brugière*

JOHN BARRYMORE AS "HAMLET"

SIG. SALVINI AS "OTHELLO"

But we may previse that he was rash in his marriage bargain, that Maria, Lady Belch, will bring him up with a round turn, that he *will* find himself coming in "earlier o' nights" in future.

And who could ever be angry with Sir Andrew? He is perfect fool, complete coward, and gull. But picture his face when his adored and trusted Sir Toby tells him that truth. And how charming he is! And what manners! His "good Mistress Mary Accost" and, with a bow to that benighted old swashbuckler, his

> And yet I will not compare with an old man.

And when Sir Toby—his tiny, mischievous Maria having kissed her hand to him and away—puffs his old chest and pulls his moustache with

> She's a beagle, true bred, and one that adores me; what o' that?

who can resist the pathos of

> I was adored once, too!

Sir Andrew was a fool, but Sir Andrew was a gentleman.

Nor is there any need to speak of the verse. Open the play where we will, of itself almost it sings to us. It is Shakespeare at his most melodious. And it is tinged throughout with a pathos which gives to the play—one hazards—a charm that the robuster *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing* lack. Whether it be Orsino's beginning

> If music be the food of love, play on

or Viola's

> Make me a willow cabin at your door

or Olivia's

> O world! how apt the poor are to be proud

or any one of fifty other passages that could be found, they all have this peculiar beauty, which Shakespeare never quite hit on again, though he did greater things. And the immortal:

> A blank, my lord, she never told her love
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek; she pin'd in thought
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat, like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.

One may dogmatise a little about that. It has the almost indescribable quality—some magic of sense and sound and vision, all three blending into a clairvoyance—which even the greatest poets achieve but once in a while.

§ 5

"Julius Cæsar"

Julius Cæsar is a play of power. It is a fine play. Had Shakespeare written it and then written no more, he could still have been called the best dramatist of his time. But it has a further interest for us in that it is a prologue to work that lets us call him (though hyperbole is poor appreciation) the greatest dramatist the world has ever seen. What intimate workings of his nature were involved in the change is idle guessing. But in *Julius Cæsar* the student may add to the playgoer's enjoyment the noting of the things that mark it as the spring-board from which the leap was taken to *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

The play seems to us in some ways more "modern" than most of its fellows. We are not Elizabethan-minded enough to get the full flavour of the Comedies, and the matter of the Histories is strange matter to us as it was not to Shakespeare—no such gap of understanding divided him as divides us from Bosworth and Agincourt. But he sees the Romans much as we may. And in this we may mark his genius, and mark too the genesis

of the power which has kept his greater work a stimulus to men's minds today. Plutarch threw open the gates of a wider world vision to him, and his imagination passed through. This it is that gives *Julius Cæsar* its importance in the whole fabric of his work. The subject gave him an horizon which he never lessened; from this time on his heroes' spirits move in larger spaces. It may seem strange that Shakespeare, who took ideas from everybody (in these days he would have been damned as a plagiarist) could yet never learn the essential thing but from himself and in his own time. It might seem strange, if we did not find it true of all real learning.

These classics had been always open to him, and Roman history was a common quarry for his fellow playwrights, he had once put a tentative foot in it himself. But not till the theme moved him whole-heartedly would he bestir himself. But then with what ease he moves. The play rises in one sweep to a heroic height—to Cæsar's murder—and he holds it there. He is writing still with the firm directness of the later Histories. Cassius may be compared with Hotspur, but he is far from Hotspur.

> I cannot tell what you and other men
> Think of this life; but for my single self
> I had as lief not be as live to be
> In awe of such a thing as I myself.
> I was born free as Cæsar; so were you.

That is a new voice, echoing from another world. Shakespeare does but give it body maybe; but he makes it ring true. And Cæsar's

> Let me have men about me that are fat:
> Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:
> Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
> He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.

Read the rest of that and on through Casca's scene. There is a tone in it all, an elder tone of disillusion staved off by

mockery, but of courage too under the burdens of the mind, different, how far, from hopes and fears in which Henry IV and V lived and moved.

And so throughout the play. Its keynotes are such things as Portia's scene with Brutus:

> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.
> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.
> Think you I am no stronger than my sex
> Being so father'd and so husbanded?

And Cæsar's

> Cowards die many times before their deaths,
> The valiant never taste of death but once.
> Of all the wonders that I yet have heard
> It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
> Seeing that death, a necessary end,
> Will come when it will come.

As Antony's

> O mighty Cæsar, dost thou lie so low,
> Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
> Shrunk to this little measure? . . .

As Brutus' reproach to the reckless Cassius:

> . . . What! shall one of us
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes
> And sell the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash as may be grasped thus?

And as the closing

> This was the noblest Roman of them all.

Photo: Ellis & Walery.

TRIAL SCENE FROM "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

Shylock. I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond.
The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

Photo: F. Frith & Co., Ltd.

SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON BEFORE RESTORATION

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE GLOBE THEATRE, ON BANKSIDE, SOUTHWARK

Where most of Shakespeare's plays were first performed.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"TRIAL OF QUEEN KATHERINE, QUEEN OF HENRY VIII," BY HARLOW

The Kemble Family and Mrs. Siddons.

Queen. Or which of your friends
Have I not strove to love, although I knew
He were mine enemy?

Henry VIII, Act II, Scene 4.

There are certain things in the story with which, it seems, Shakespeare cannot assimilate his sympathies; and it is instructive to note how comparatively ineffective things at once become. Set them beside other passages in the play which should have no finer effect, and they appear perfunctory. The play sags towards the end in consequence. By the time *Antony and Cleopatra* came to be written, Shakespeare was master of this matter.

But as marks of his still growing mastery of the theatre we should note how the whole play is drawn together in an unity of effect, how he uses every resource of words to paint an atmosphere of dark and dread for the night before the killing, how skilfully he marshals his poetry and prose, his mob and his senators, to make contrast, and uses all his armoury of "knocks" and music, "a low march within," the sound of the song fading away as Lucius falls asleep before the ghost of Cæsar comes, and the loud alarums of the battle—uses them for their full effect.

It is a very spacious play.

§ 6

"Macbeth"

Finally we come to Macbeth. Much has been said about it—it has been named, though not conclusively, as the greatest of the tragedies—and we cannot say much now within our allotted space. If it is not the greatest, it is the grimmest, certainly, the starkest, there is no other that slips down so unrelentingly into hell.

It is worth while to read this through first of all—as we planned with the earlier plays—for the sake of its tunes and harmonies; partly that we may recognise to the full the sheer musical difference between

> . . . Light thickens, and the crow
> Makes wing to the rocky wood

and (say)

> Gallop apace you fiery steeds
> Towards Phoebus' lodging; such a waggoner
> As Phaethon would whip you to the west
> And bring in cloudy night immediately

and partly that we may discover how—having mastered the magic of the words—Shakespeare will now sometimes use them but as a sounding-board or little more, for a meaning that quite transcends their sense. A magic use of words indeed! It may even be said that in these later plays he grew impatient of language. He wanted, on occasion, to give his actors weapons of words with which to batter—reason apart, if need be—upon the emotions of their audience. And if syntax interfered and would weaken the effect, so much the worse for syntax.

When Macbeth mutters

> To know my deed 'twere best not know myself

neither actor nor audience need trouble to parse the sentence; its effective meaning comes home. When Lady Macbeth, her mind hissing and coiling, like a snake preparing to strike, says:

> . . . Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, "This thou must do, if thou have it
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone."

it is hard (even after settling what the true text should be; a matter of some dispute) for the hearer to discover an exact meaning. But any Lady Macbeth can convey to her audience—for all that she may rightly wish the words came clearer—what her fears of Macbeth in this particular are. This habit of writing, it may be added, tended to grow on him till in his very latest plays he relapses to it without the excuse of emotional pressure, the only result then being, apparently, a tiresome, if musical, incoherence.

The text of *Macbeth* is in itself a difficulty. Our sole authority for it is the first Folio, and there it is worse printed than most of the plays. But besides this it is practically certain that whole scenes in it are not Shakespeare's at all. No responsible opinion holds that he wrote Hecate; it is quite likely that his work does not begin till Macbeth's entrance with

> So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

The play's unrelieved gloom, it would appear, lessened its popularity, and Middleton, probably—a good enough dramatist in his way—was brought in to liven it up with a few songs and dances. We must remember that in those days a play was as much the property of the theatre that produced it as were the clothes it was performed in. Middleton did more than was called for, doubtless. He may have tagged a speech or two with a more cheery couplet. And it is in the last degree unlikely that Shakespeare opened the play with Macbeth's appearance; the material of the preceding scene is probably Shakespeare's, though it is mauled about almost past recognition.

Again, it seems certain that the play was written with an eye to the special approbation of James I. This is betokened by the Scottish story and the witches, but more especially by the reference to Banquo's royal descendants and the speech about touching for the King's Evil. This has an importance apart from its interest to the student. When James came to England one of the things, it would appear, that the English courtiers were proudest to show him was the English drama. And he was not slow to patronise it. Kings and queens did not go to the theatre in those days. But in the winter of 1604-5 no less than seven of Shakespeare's plays were given at Whitehall. And *Othello, Macbeth,* and *King Lear* took their place with the Comedies as entertainments that a king and his court might be expected to enjoy.

The greatest of Shakespeare's plays this may not be. But

he wrote nothing more terrific—in the true sense of that word—than the two sections containing Duncan's murder and Banquo's. Read and feel and picture and think over, and then again think over and picture and feel and read from "Enter Lady Macbeth, reading a letter" to

> . . . there's warrant in the theft
> Which steals itself when there's no mercy left;

and (noting the little breathing space of the scene between the old man and Ross and Macduff) from

> Thou hast it now; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all

to

> We are yet but young in deed,

and see if you can exhaust the tragic effect of them. It will exhaust you sooner. *Macbeth* is indeed the tragedy of unchecked will destroying itself, as *Hamlet* is the tragedy of unready will wasting itself.

Lady Macbeth

The first section of the two is the easier to picture. It is all more explicit. The salient thing, perhaps, about Lady Macbeth, who is its motive power, even more than her fixity of purpose, is her terrible clarity of vision. She not only sees how the deed can be done, but she sees each aspect of it in terms of such simplicity. She has a little doubt, apparently, as to whether her sex will not physically unfit her for this sort of thing:

> . . . come to my woman's breasts
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers

is her apostrophe. But when she finds that the wine which muddles men's heads only makes hers clearer, that she can stand

and listen quite coolly while Macbeth does the deed, that she has made no mistake in doing her part, it is with a dreadful, almost with a childish eagerness of daring, that she says:

> . . . Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept I'd done't . . .

And when Macbeth stands broken, body and spirit, for the moment by the horror of his deed, she turns on him, coolly, steadily, with:

> . . . Infirm of purpose!
> Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
> Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
> That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed
> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal
> For it must seem their guilt.

And she goes and does it without a tremor. Macbeth is as guilty at heart, but the sails of his mind back and fill with doubts and fears. Her word is just

> How easy is it then!

And with a terrible smoothness—and for us with what a vividness!—Duncan comes to the castle at sunset, is greeted by his "honoured hostess," kisses her, as the custom was (one wonders if her cheek was cold), and passes in with his little train. We must imagine the torches that cross the courtyard, the lighted rooms that we glimpse, the music playing while the king sups. Later come the few words of good-night to the troubled Banquo, then the stillness of the sleeping house, and the tinkling of the bell that calls Macbeth to his work in the dark. And while the short night passes, two shadows of evil pass in and out of the courtyard. The knocking on the gate begins and grows louder and louder till it rouses the jovial porter, who cracks his jokes as he pulls on his clothes. The dawn comes.

Mark how Shakespeare brings in a new character and strikes a new note for the discovery of the murder. Macduff has come to the castle with Duncan, but he has not spoken before. It is his voice—the voice of a conscience-free courageous man—that rings out with the news, that leads the chorus of amazement and horror. Mark, too, his quick direct question to Macbeth, when he hears that the blood-stained grooms have been killed. After this he falls almost silent; throws but a word and a glance towards Lady Macbeth who has fainted or pretends so. We must see him with a steady eye on Macbeth and a very sceptical ear for his verbose protestations. Still he's a shrewd man. He sees, as do Duncan's two sons, that Macbeth has the game in his hands. They are all in his castle and in his power. He bides his time and goes. Banquo and Ross and Lennox make peace with their consciences. Malcolm and Donaldbain escape. Macbeth has won his crown.

All this has been plain sailing enough, but in the next section we must look well behind the words. We must hear in the simple speech of Banquo:

> Thou hast it now; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all . . .

the tone of the kindly good man tempted by the benefit of another's ill deeds. We must see Macbeth as King, weighted with splendour, his very speech pallid and hollow and cold. Observe the curious emptiness of his lines to Banquo as he sends him to his death, and listen to the ominous beat in "Ride you this afternoon?" "Fail not our feast." "Goes Fleance with you?" Observe too, that Lady Macbeth, but for a formal greeting, stands silent and is dismissed with the others. She goes in dread, evidently she lives in dread, for she can read her husband's thoughts —who better?—but he broods alone and tells her none of his doings. She knows well enough that some mischief's afoot, but she knows no more. We must picture her, while the last part of this scene passes, waiting somewhere, waiting for him to come.

In the second scene we see she can endure it no more. She sends a servant to the king; Banquo is in her mind.

But when he comes he is as far from her as ever, and she as helpless to help him, she who has been the very spirit of his doings till now. She can only utter a platitude or two, tell him not to keep so much alone, to look more cheerful. When Banquo's name is spoken she shrinks from the ill implication, then forces herself to a question. Macbeth treats her like a child. He loves her, but he knows and she knows that she's but a broken woman now. And how little of this is written in words; the right drama of it is that it is left unsaid.

Banquo's Murder

Next consider the perfectly done episode of Banquo's murder. The two murderers, with the third—to our surprise, as to theirs—sent to spy on them. A good stroke, telling us more of Macbeth than ten speeches might do. The scene painted for us in twenty words.

> The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day
> Now spurs the lated traveller apace
> To gain the timely inn.

Then Banquo's simple "It will rain tonight"; and with a rough "Let it come down" they set on him. Fleance escapes; the light goes out; they stand in the dark, the dead man at their feet, whispering a few detached words.

We come to the banquet. A scene of some splendour it should be, for Macbeth would make his court a well-liked place by such means as he could. He moves among his guests, forcedly jovial. At any moment the news that Banquo is dead may come. If it gets about, so much the better that they should all be innocently feasting. The Queen sits aloof on her chair of state. He will not trust her nerve now among people, or she will not trust it; and she's so weary she can hardly hold up her

head under the heavy crown. But she sees him go to the door, and he stays there too long talking, and his face begins to play him tricks. She knows that danger, rouses herself to recall him, to distract attention from his looks. He responds, plays the game too hard rather, speaks of his absent comrade, and then—Banquo has not failed the feast he was bidden to. He has come quickly in and there he sits blood-boltered in Macbeth's very chair. Think of the effect. No one else sees him. Macbeth even does not see him till he goes to take his seat and the ghost turns his blood-stained face—it is within a foot of him—and stares at him with sightless eyes. There is no scene like it. Nor is it the physical thing that strains at our nerves. It is the sight of Macbeth, racked with horror, yet not yielding an inch, not able, as it were, to yield or to fly, for the spectre is in his own brain—how can he fly it? And his wretched wife, weak and worn as she is, mustering what she can of her old strength to save him from discovery, to save him from himself—a ghastly, heroic effort. They are alone at last, among the flickering torches at the disordered table.

> It will have blood. They say blood will have blood.

And he harps on the word and the thought.

> The secret'st man of blood,
> I am in blood stepped in so far,

a murderer in heart and mind now, and nothing but a murderer. He sees his path. She is exhausted, she has lost all power over him. She can only say dully

> You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

But he answers—as if, cut free from all remorse, he could now command himself—answers hardly, confidently, boldly:

> Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse
> Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
> We are yet but young in deed.

The play moves to its end, to the fading out of the shadow that Lady Macbeth has become. She killed herself, it could have needed little doing. The nemesis of her clarity of vision, of her seeing things just as they were, a spot of blood but as a spot of blood, no more, is that nightly in the sleep that should be a little salvation to her, she wanders, pitifully rubbing the blood of Duncan from her hands in vain. And Macbeth, self-damned, cannot even weep for her death, shrugs at the news and turns away. How do we first see him? Coming from victory, to be greeted by Duncan's generous gratitude. What is his end? The end of a beast tied to a stake and baited to death.

§ 7

I will make no attempt to sum up the virtues of Shakespeare, to pass æsthetic judgment on him. That is a task that has been well done and ill done and on the whole overdone. He is a great dramatist, a great poet, so great that we can all of us find something that we want in him. And the search—if as aforesaid we will take a little trouble to learn his language and the method of his art—need not be a hard one. For open the book, make ready, and his plays leap to life from its pages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For more careful study and for wider knowledge of the plays, these few books will be found useful.

The Life of Shakespeare, by Sir Sidney Lee, comprehends all that is certainly known, and shows this to be much more than is usually supposed.

William Shakespeare, by Georg Brandes, is a somewhat more imaginative and sympathetic biography, which should be read to counteract Sir Sidney Lee's matter-of-fact point of view.

William Shakespeare as Dramatist, by Brander Matthews, is the best study of the playwright as a craftsman for the stage.

For the content of the plays as literature, the best aids are Edward Dowden's *Shakespere, a Critical Study of His Mind and Art,* and A. C. Bradley's *Shakesperean Tragedy.*

Shakespeare's England. 2 vols.: edited by Sir Walter Raleigh. This pictures the times he lived in, the people he wrote for, and is a veritable dictionary of the terms he uses.

Shakespeare's Theatre, by Ashley H. Thorndike. An excellent description of the technical means by which he worked.

For a modern edition of the plays, with fairly comprehensive notes, the Arden Edition, now edited by R. H. Case, each play in a separate volume, is recommended, or the *Tudor Shakespeare,* edited by W. A. Neilson and A. H. Thorndike.

While for detailed textual study, Horace Howard Furness's *Variorum* should be used. The vast array of notes which this edition contains retail every comment of consequence that has been made upon the text since Shakespeare came to be edited.

XI

SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON

SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON

TWO hundred years before Dr. Johnson and his Literary Club met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, Soho, an even greater set of literary men met at the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street, Cheapside. Here, one might have met Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and the other great Elizabethans, roystering and gossiping. The drink was good. Ben Jonson wrote:

> A pure cup of rich Canary wine,
> Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine.

And the talk was better. Beaumont is our witness:

> What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life.

Well might Keats say:

> Souls of poets dead and gone,
> What Elysium have ye known,
> Happy field or mossy cavern,
> Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

§ 1

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Christopher Marlowe, who was born in the same year as Shakespeare, has been described by Swinburne as "the father of English tragedy, and the creator of English blank verse." He was the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, and took his degree at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1584. His first tragedy, *Tamburlane the Great,* was acted when he was twenty-four. *Tamburlane the Great* tells the story, highly embellished by the poet's fancy, of the Mongolian potentate who overran India and defeated the Turks at the end of the fourteenth century. Marlowe makes his *Tamburlane* an eager poet as well as despot, seeking for a perfect and unattainable power. As Mr. George Saintsbury says, "There is here no central action, only a dissolving series of scenes of terror and blood, no character except the dim and gigantic one of Tamburlaine." In this play Marlowe uses, almost for the first time, the "mighty line" which is the chief creation of English literary art, and which is familiar to us in Shakespeare's plays. A supreme example of the "mighty line" is found in Faust's address to Helen of Troy:

> Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Mr. Arthur Symons has finely said that Marlowe's imagination "is filled with fire and flame, with smoke and hell's fumes; with the savourous scent of incense, with the bitter taste of unshed tears."

The Elizabethan world was intoxicated by Marlowe's great literary achievement in modern English, for it must be remembered that Spenser was old-fashioned even in his own time and Shakespeare had yet to be known. Nash, a contemporary dramatist, sneered at "the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse." But the beauty of Marlowe's writing and the dignity of his imagination are demonstrated by such lines as these:

If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admired themes;
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit;
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.

Doctor Faustus

Marlowe's *Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* appeared soon after *Tamburlane.* The tragedy was founded on a mediæval German legend, a version of which had already been translated into English and evidently read by Marlowe. Marlowe's Faust is not impelled to his bargain with the devil by the desire for pleasure, like the Faust of the legend, nor by the hunger for knowledge, like Goethe's Faust. It is the power which comes of knowledge, a god-like experience, that his Faust desired and for which he was willing to sell his soul. "How greatly it is all planned!" Goethe exclaimed, after reading Marlowe's *Faustus,* and Swinburne declared that few masterpieces of any age equal it in "the qualities of terror and splendour." The play ends in a scene of awesome tragedy when the devils come to demand the fulfilment of the bargain, a scene, as Swinburne said, that has "no parallel in all the range of tragedy."

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransomed me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—
A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved!
O, no end is limited to damned souls!

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis! were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be changed
Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolved in elements;
But mine must live, still to be plagued in hell.
Curst be the parents that engendered me!
No, Faustus: curse thyself: curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of Heaven.

[*The clock strikes twelve.*

O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.

[*Thunder and lightning.*

O, soul, be changed into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean—ne'er be found.

[*Enter Devils.*

My God! my God! look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah Mephistophilis!

[*Exeunt Devils with* Faustus.

The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus was followed by *The Jew of Malta*—Swinburne said that only Milton had ever equalled "the glory or the melody" of the soliloquy of Barabas in the opening scene of this play; *Edward the Second,* in which Marlowe reached the summit of his powers; and two short fragmentary plays. It is also generally believed that Marlowe was the author of a considerable part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI.*

The great dramatist was also a lyrical poet, capable of the winsome heart of "The Passionate Shepherd."

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

His most beautiful poem, *Hero and Leander,* was somewhat inadequately completed by George Chapman, but Marlowe's part in it, the first three sections, is among the glories of poetry. Shakespeare in *As You Like It* quoted from it the line "Whoever loved that loved not at first sight."

A Tragic Death

In the spring of 1593 the plague was raging in London, and Marlowe went to stay at Deptford, then a small country village. Other Londoners followed his example, and one night the poet was killed in a tavern brawl by "a bawdy serving-man," who was his rival for the favours of a worthless strumpet. A tragic ending to the life of one of England's greatest tragic poets!

After Shakespeare, Marlowe was the chief ornament of the matchless group of poets who met at the "Mermaid," and after his death a younger poet declared that his plays

moved such delight,
That men would shun their sleep in still dark night
To meditate upon his golden lines.

§ 2

BEN JONSON

Ben Jonson was eight years younger than Shakespeare and Marlowe. His father was a Protestant preacher, and he was

educated at Westminster School. Jonson served some time as a soldier, but while he was still in the early twenties he had become mixed up in what was then the rather raffish society of London actors and playwrights, attaining notoriety by killing an actor in a duel.

His first play, *Every Man in his Humour,* was produced by Shakespeare's company in 1598, Shakespeare himself probably being in the cast. The characters of the play are London citizens—all well-known theatrical types—one of them, Master Stephen, being an evident predecessor of Bob Acres. *Every Man in his Humour* was followed by *Every Man out of his Humour,* which was a failure. The dramatist, acting after the manner of his kind, quarrelled with the company and wrote satires on the various players, and on dramatists more successful than himself.

Jonson lived until 1637. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and an admirer caused to be engraved on the slab over his grave "O Rare Ben Jonson." Of his numerous plays *The Silent Woman, The Alchemist, Bartholomew Fair,* and *The Tale of a Tub* are perhaps the best known. He satirised the men and manners of his time as Aristophanes had satirised the people of Athens. He also wrote a treatise on Aristotle, and a volume of essays and maxims of no great value or interest. When James I succeeded Elizabeth, Jonson was employed to make masques for the Court ladies to act, Inigo Jones supplying the scenery and decorations; and quite naturally the dramatist quarrelled with the decorator. He held his place as Master of the Masques until 1632, and then three of his plays proving failures one after another, he declared in an ode that he

> left the loathed stage,
> And the still more loathsome age.

Jonson is mainly remembered for his beautiful lyrics, that have an attraction that his plays nearly always lack, at least when

they are read and not seen. One of the most delightful is the Hymn to Diana:

Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever;
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright!

Another is the song from "Underwoods"

Oh, do not wanton with those eyes,
Lest I be sick with seeing;
Nor cast them down, but let them rise,
Lest shame destroy their being.

Oh, be not angry with those fires,
For then their threats will kill me;
Nor look too kind on my desires,
For then my hopes will spill me.

Oh, do not steep them in thy tears,
For so will sorrow slay me;
Nor spread them as distraught with fears;
Mine own enough betray me.

The "Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke" was long attributed to Jonson, and it may be quoted here as quite in his manner, though it was written by William Browne (1591-1643), the author of Britannia's Pastorals:

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,—
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death, ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

And Jonson lives for us all with the immortal song "To Celia":

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not wither'd be;
But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee.

Jonson's friendly relations with Shakespeare have been alluded to. In January, 1619, he visited William Drummond, the Scottish poet, in his home at Hawthornden, and in his conversations, which his host fortunately recorded, he remarked that "Shakespeare wanted Art," and that "Shakespeare, in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some hundred miles." These casual remarks have been perhaps too often quoted; standing alone they would not represent Jonson's attitude toward the dramatist of whom in his own time he was the greatest rival. In his *Discoveries* (first published in 1641) occurs his far more adequate portrait of his friend:

I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he

penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, "Would he had blotted a thousand," which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour, for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped.

Jonson's most famous praise of Shakespeare, however, is the poem entitled *To the Memory of My Beloved Master William Shakespeare,* of which the following lines are the most important:

My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room;
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live
And we have wits to read and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,
I mean with great but disproportioned Muses;
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou dost our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honor thee I would not seek
For names; but call forth thundering Æschylus,
Euripides and Sophocles to us;
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage, or when thy socks were on
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe!
He was not for an age, but for all time.

Of the other Elizabethan dramatists we can do no more than mention the names of Beaumont and Fletcher, authors of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and many beautiful lyrics; John Webster, the author of the blood-curdling *Duchess of Malfi;* Heywood, whom Lamb called the prose Shakespeare; Massinger, the author of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts;* Chapman, the first English translator of Homer; and Dekker, whom we remember for the beautiful lines:

> the best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

§ 3

FRANCIS BACON

The Great Scholar

Francis Bacon was statesman, lawyer, wit, philosopher, and man of letters; and in each of these several capacities he won a pre-eminent place. Bacon was the last scholar who could say in his own chosen words, and with but slight exaggeration, that he had taken all knowledge for his province. He lived in the early dawn of the age of specialisation while it was still just possible for an able and industrious man to make himself master of the whole body of knowledge in existence. Many others had rivalled him in the mere acquisition of learning; but none since Aristotle had so succeeded in impressing the whole with his own mental stamp, and in inspiring a new campaign against ignorance and disorder.

Bacon had the good fortune to live in one of the great ages in the world's history, in the "spacious days" of Queen Elizabeth. He was born in 1560, two years after the accession of that great sovereign; and he died in 1626. As a boy he entered into the rich and glorious intellectual heritage of the Renais-

sance. In middle life he would see the publication of the masterpieces of Spenser, Montaigne, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Before he died the supreme age of French literature was dawning. There was a new stir in the scientific world, the mediæval belief in mystery and magic was giving place to experienced and rational induction. Copernicus had died in 1543; but his work was being carried on by Kepler and Galileo. Not since the days of Socrates had men been so keenly interested in the things of the mind; and this interest Bacon shared to the full.

His own career displays all the grave defects as well as the excellencies of the sixteenth century. In the pursuit of knowledge he was indefatigable; but he was equally indefatigable in the pursuit of ambition. He cheerfully laid down his life in the interest of science; but he had been just as willing to sacrifice the life of his friend and benefactor when it stood in the way of his own worldly achievement. Indeed, Bacon is a curious and most unpleasing mixture of greatness and littleness, of magnanimity and baseness. His published writings were those of a sage; his private letters are only too frequently those of a mean time-server.

The Blot on Bacon's Name

Pope's well-known line, "The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind," is only a poet's licence, but it is based upon undoubted facts. At the same time, the graver charge of corruption has been overstated. That Bacon had accepted gifts from suitors, a common practice at that time, for which he stood his trial, he did not deny; but in his appeal to the King and to his peers he did, most proudly and emphatically, deny all guilt, and spurned the notion that the fountain of pure justice had been defiled by any act of his.

The case of Essex demands a few words of consideration. The headstrong folly of Essex had brought him within the limits of the law of treason, and his numerous enemies determined to

accomplish his destruction. There was good evidence of his guilt; but the mismanagement of the case by the great lawyer Coke put the cause of the prosecution in peril. Bacon owed everything to the disinterested friendship of Essex; but in order to win the favour of the Queen he put his services at her disposal for the purpose of destroying Essex. This turned the scale; the unfortunate Earl was condemned, and duly put to death. Many attempts have been made to extenuate this act, but without avail. It is a blot upon Bacon's fame which no apology can wipe out. In the just and eloquent words of Dean Church—"No one can doubt that the question was between his own prospect and his friend; and that to his own interest he sacrificed his friend and his own honour."

§ 4

Baconian Philosophy

It is not easy to explain Bacon's position satisfactorily; and many leading scientists and philosophers have denied to him much merit. He was unquestionably a great writer and a great orator; but was he anything besides? The claim sometimes made for him that he was the father of modern science cannot be maintained; indeed, his work in this field is poor both in method and in results when we compare it with that of his own contemporaries, Kepler, Galileo, and Harvey. Nor can we say that he was the inventor of induction, though he undoubtedly did much to make it popular. It must also be admitted that his contempt for Aristotle, for the mediæval schoolmen, and for the deductive method goes far beyond what is justifiable. A modern philosopher would probably find more of real value in the writings of Thomas Aquinas than in those of Bacon. Indeed, Harvey remarked acidly enough that Bacon wrote philosophy "like a Lord Chancellor." Still Bacon accomplished much. He insisted upon the importance of knowledge, upon its

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

BEN JONSON, BY G. HONTHORST

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *From a mezzotint by Zoffany.*

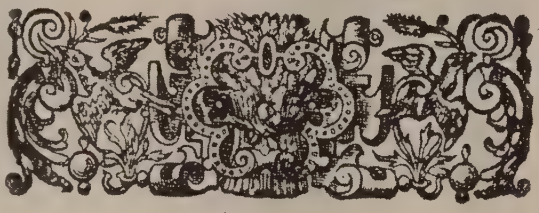
DAVID GARRICK AS "ABEL DRUGGER" IN BEN JONSON'S "THE ALCHEMIST"

Essayes.

Religious Meditations.

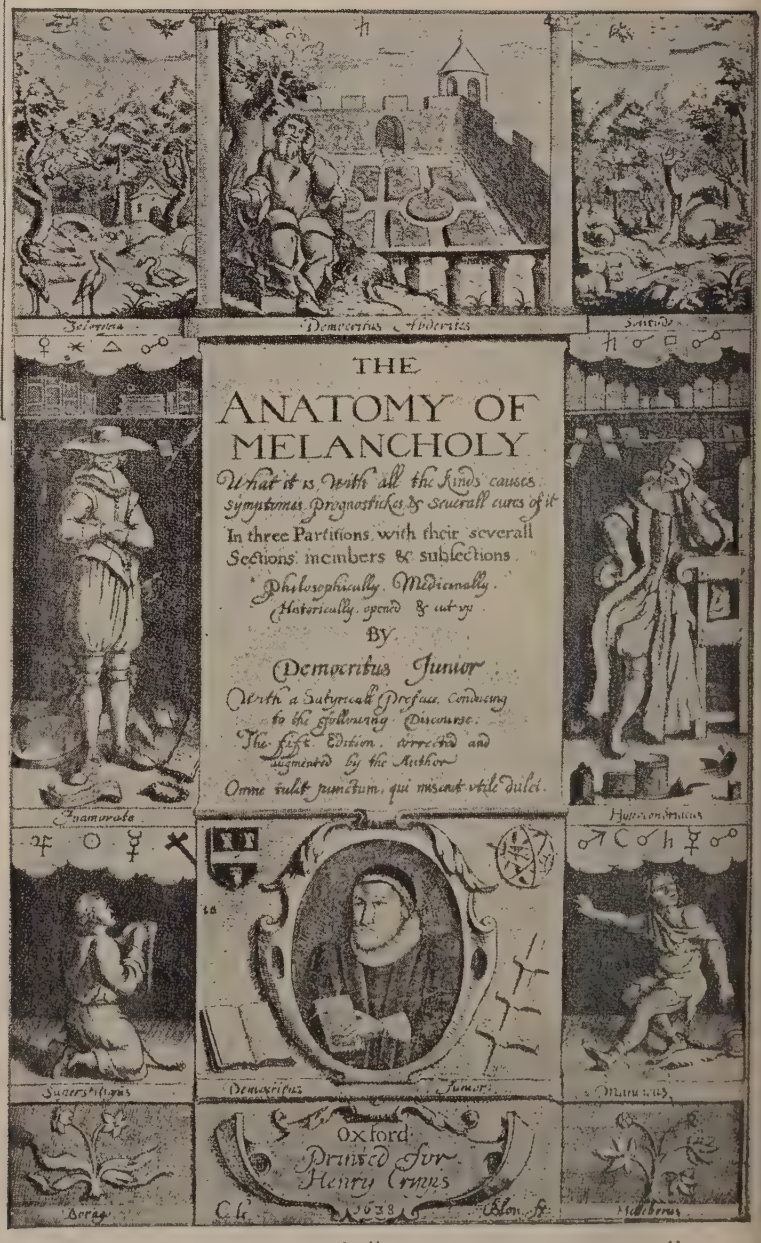
Places of perswasion and disswasion.

Seene and allowed.



AT LONDON,
Printed for Humfrey Hooper, and are to be sold at the blacke Beare in Chauncery Lane.
1597.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF BACON'S ESSAYS


THE
ANATOMY OF
MELANCHOLY
What it is, With all the kinds causes symptomes Prognostickes & severall cures of it
In three Partitions, with their severall Sections members & subsections
Philosophically, Medicinally, Historically opened & cut vp
By
Democritus Junior
With a Satyricall Preface, conducing to the following Discourse.
The fifth Edition, corrected and augmented by the Author
Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.
Oxford
Printed for
Henry Cripps
1638

TITLE-PAGE OF BURTON'S "ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY"

unity, and upon its practical aim. It is sufficient here to quote Macaulay's summary: "The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants."

Unfortunately Bacon was too conservative to abandon the old custom of writing all his most important works in Latin. Indeed, it is little to his credit that, in the age of Shakespeare, he should have had little faith in the future of the English language. For English readers the important works are the *Essays, The Advancement of Learning, The History of Henry VII,* and *The New Atlantis.* All these exhibit in greater or less degree the qualities of his style. There is abundant fancy, which sometimes rises into true imagination, delicacy of observation, a fine command of diction, and a real eloquence. The least ornamental of his writings in style is the *Essays,* which are composed of highly condensed reflections and apophthegms. The following passage is illustrative of this:

> Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them: for they teach not their own use: but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and compute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.
>
> Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit;

and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

Bacon's writings consist of theological, philosophical, and political essays, a *History of the Reign of King Henry VII,* a vast collection of letters, a collection of *Apophthegms,* humorous stories which Macaulay described as "the best collections of jests in the world," and *The New Atlantis,* a philosophical romance founded on Plato's story of a lost island in the Western Ocean. Bacon never finished *The New Atlantis.* In common with Plato, Sir Thomas More, and many modern writers, his idea was to sketch an ideal commonwealth. Solomon's house in *The New Atlantis* was a prophecy of the Royal Society. In addition to all this varied literary work, Bacon translated certain of the Psalms into English verse.

The following quotations from Bacon illustrate his point of view and the charm of his literary expression. In reading them it is interesting to remember the theory that Bacon was the author of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare. There is unquestionably in many of these quotations thoughts often to be found in Shakespeare, and it will doubtless be felt by the reader that while it is inconceivable that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, it would have been quite possible for Shakespeare to have written much of Bacon.

"This is certain, the mind that is most prone to be puffed up with prosperity, is most weak and apt to be dejected with the least puff of adversity."

"There is nothing more certain in nature, than that it is impossible for any body to be utterly annihilated: as it was the work of the omnipotency of God to make somewhat of nothing, so it requireth the like omnipotency to turn somewhat into nothing."

"As for talkers and futile persons, they are commonly vain

and credulous withal. For he that talketh what he knoweth, will also talk what he knoweth not."

"There be three means to fortify belief. The first, is experience; the second, reason; the third, authority: and that of these which is far the most potent, is authority; for belief upon reason or upon experience, will stagger."

"This is well to be weighed, that boldness is ever blind, for it seeth not dangers and inconveniences; therefore it is ill in counsel, good in execution: so that the right use of bold persons is that they never command in chief, but be seconds, and under the direction of others. For in counsel, it is good to see dangers; and in execution not to see them, except they be very great."

"He that hath wife and children, hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

"A cripple in the right way, may beat a racer in the wrong one. Nay, the fleeter and better the racer is, who hath once missed his way, the farther he leaveth it behind."

"It hath been an opinion, that the French are wiser than they seem, and the Spaniards seem wiser than they are."

"God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of men; without which, palaces and buildings are but gross handy works: And a man shall ever see, that when ages grow to civility and elegancy men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

"Little minds, though never so full of virtue, can be but a little virtuous."

"Great riches have sold more men than they have bought."

"A popular judge is a deformed thing: and plaudits are fitter for players than for magistrates."

"I know many wise men who fear to die; for the change is bitter, and flesh would refuse to prove it: besides, the expecta-

tion brings terror, and that exceeds the evil. But I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death. This is strength and the blood to virtue—to contemn things that be desired, and to neglect that which is feared."

§ 5

HERRICK AND LOVELACE

The seventeenth century in England was the Puritan century, but it is important to remember that the more distinguished of the earlier Elizabethan poets were definitely Puritan. Men like Sidney and Spenser had no sympathy whatever with what is supposed to be the common Paganism of the Renaissance. They were preoccupied with ethical values, as well as with æsthetic. The alliance between poetry and Puritanism was short-lived. It cannot be traced in Shakespeare, and as the poet abandoned Puritanism, so the Puritan, and even the man of religious mind who was not a Puritan, began to regard poetry as a device of the devil. George Herbert, though no Puritan, burnt his love poetry when he took Holy Orders, and Donne was only prevented by his friends from doing the same thing. But while a great part of England was absorbed at the same time in the problems of predestination, and no taxation without representation, the true English light-hearted love of nature and joy in living was not without its literary expression. This expression found delightful and permanent form in the poetry of Robert Herrick, the poetical son of Ben Jonson.

§ 6

A Worldly Parson

Herrick was a Devonshire parson. For nearly twenty years he lived in a remote village intensely interested in the life around him—the Morris dances, the Christmas revels, the simple rural life. Herrick was a queer soul. He is said to have had

a favourite pig which he taught to drink out of a tankard and, on one occasion, he threw the manuscript of his sermon at the congregation because they were not paying attention. He was an easygoing worldly parson, hating Puritans, and staunch in his loyalty to the king. This loyalty caused him to be driven from his living during the Commonwealth, but he returned after the Restoration and died in his parish at the age of eighty-four.

Herrick's love of nature struck a new note in English literature. He was almost the first of the pastoral poets. His poems, as Andrew Lang said, are "like a large laughing meadow in early June, diapered with flowers and sweet with the songs of birds, some a mere note or two of merry music, some as prolonged and varied though never so passionate as the complaint of the nightingale." One of the most charming of his lyrics is "To Blossoms":

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
  Why do ye fall so fast?
  Your date is not so past,
But you may stay yet here awhile
  To blush and gently smile,
    And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
  An hour or half's delight,
  And so bid good-night?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
  Merely to show your worth,
    And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
  May read how soon things have
  Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride
    Like you, awhile, they glide
      Into the grave.

Herrick's "sweet, spontaneous, glad, and musical" muse is joyfully evident in the following:

CHERRY RIPE

Cherry ripe, ripe, ripe, I cry,
Full and fair ones,—come and buy!
If so be you ask me where
They do grow, I answer, there,
Where my Julia's lips do smile,—
There's the land, or cherry-isle,
Whose plantations fully show,
All the year, where cherries grow.

TO DAFFODILS

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
  You haste away so soon:
As yet the early rising sun
  Has not attained his noon.
    Stay, stay,
  Until the hasting day
    Has run
  But to the even-song;
And having prayed together we
  Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
  We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
  As you, or any thing.
    We die
  As your hours do, and dry
    Away
  Like to the Summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning dew
  Ne'er to be found again.

One of his most delightfully phrased love-poems is

THE NIGHT-PIECE, TO JULIA

Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,
The Shooting Starres attend thee;
And the Elves also,
Whose little eyes glow,
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No *Will-o'-th'-Wispe* mislight thee;
Nor Snake, or Slow-worme bite thee:
But on, on thy way
Not making a stay,
Since Ghost ther's none to affright thee.

Let not the darke thee cumber;
What though the Moon do's slumber?
The Starres of the night
Will lend thee their light,
Like Tapers cleare without number.

Then, *Julia*, let me wooe thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me:
And when I shall meet
Thy silv'ry feet,
My soule I'le poure into thee.

Herrick loved children as deeply as he loved roses and, for all his easygoing life, he had a deep and sincere sense of religion. The fact is that his worldliness was probably only a literary manner which he caught from the classical poets whom he imitated and paraphrased.

§ 7

Richard Lovelace

Herrick's devotion to the Royalist cause cost him his living for a few years. The same devotion cost Richard Lovelace, the brilliant, handsome cavalier poet, his entire fortune, and Puri-

tan rancour condemned to a miserable death at the age of forty. We remember Lovelace best for his lines:

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

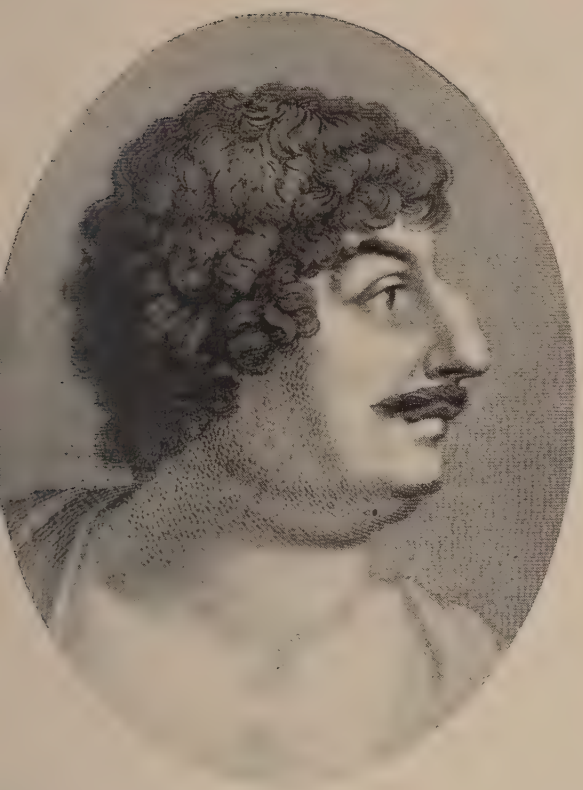
Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

In 1642 Lovelace was imprisoned at Westminster for demanding that the King should be restored to his rights, and while there he wrote "To Althea from Prison," which contains the well-known stanza:

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

Other Contemporary Writers

Like Herrick and Lovelace, Edmund Waller was a Royalist, but he was a worldling and a time-server. Not even his song, "Go, lovely rose," has served to keep alive his once great reputation. He is thought of now chiefly as a skilful craftsman in verse, to whom Dryden was indebted for some of his art.



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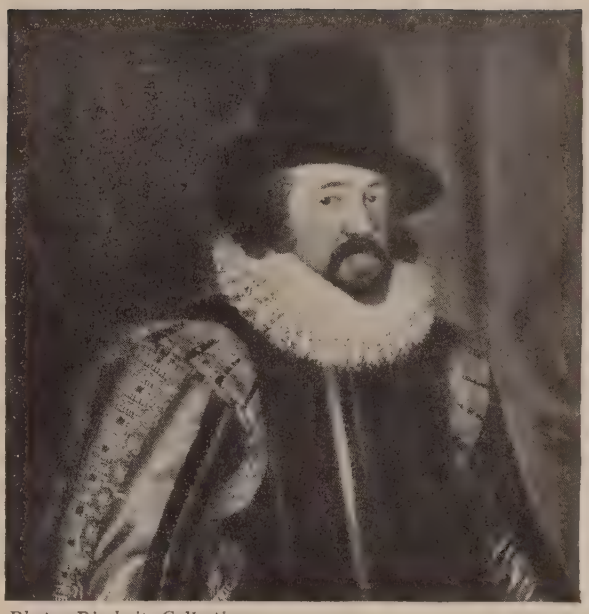
ROBERT HERRICK



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FRANCIS BACON, BY PAUL VAN SOMER

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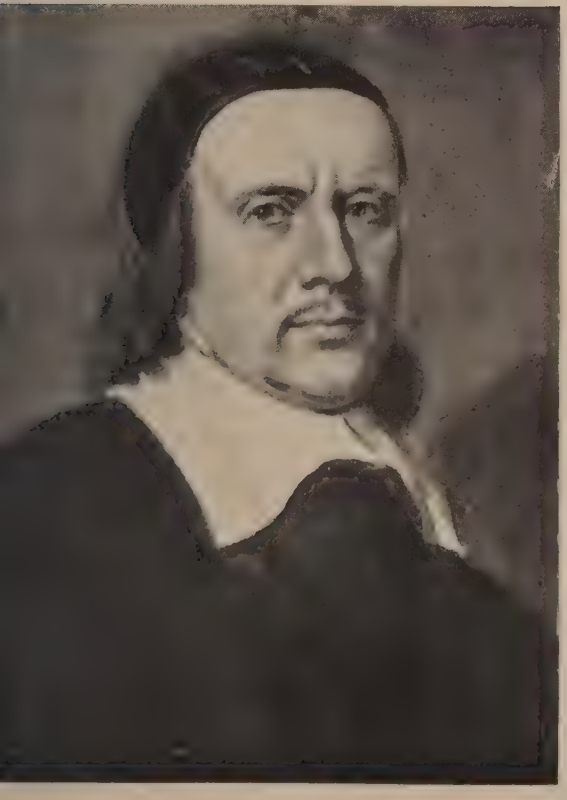

JEREMY TAYLOR

Author of the famous *Holy Living*, and whose *Liberty of Prophesying* has been described as "the first distinct and avowed defence of toleration which had been ventured on in England—perhaps in Christendom."

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Nothing demonstrates the deep piety of the first half of the seventeenth century more clearly than the fact that the partisans of Charles I, denounced by the Puritans as the children of wrath and the enemies of God, included such distinguished writers of religious verse as Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw and Cowley, and such divines as Fuller and Jeremy Taylor. It is a curious fact that most of the literature of piety produced during the years of struggle between King and Parliament came from the pens of Royalist Churchmen, and not from the pens of Puritan Dissenters.

§ 8

ROBERT BURTON

Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy"

One of the most remarkable books published in England in the years before the Civil War was Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy.* Burton was another literary clergyman, and his book, which is unique in English prose, contains a definition of melancholy, a discussion of its causes, and suggested cures. Love melancholy is given a section of its own, in which Burton's quaint humour finds full play, and the book finishes in serious vein with an examination of religious melancholy and suggestions for the cure of despair. As he proceeds, melancholy comes to mean to Burton every imaginable ill, and the most modern scientific men admire the sanity and the subtlety of his diagnoses. He illustrates his points with quotations from scores of ancient and modern authors, and it has often been suggested that a large number of the quotations were invented by Burton himself. Dr. Johnson and Laurence Sterne were fervent admirers of the *Anatomy,* and it was one of Charles Lamb's enthusiasms. To him Robert Burton was a "fantastic great old man," and in a letter written in 1821 Lamb says: "I am hanging over for the thousandth time some passage in old Burton."

Burton's humour and wisdom may be appreciated from the following passages. Many of them have become the counters of everyday modern speech:

Naught so sweet as melancholy.

A dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant may see further than a giant himself.

Him that makes shoes go barefoot himself.

Rob Peter, and pay Paul.

Penny wise, pound foolish.

Women wear the breeches.

Can build castles in the air.

All our geese are swans.

Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride a gallop.

Many things happen between the cup and the lip.

Birds of a feather will gather together.

No cord nor cable can so forcibly draw, or hold so fast, as love can do with a twined thread.

Marriage and hanging go by destiny; matches are made in heaven.

To make necessity a virtue.

Where God hath a temple, the Devil will have a chapel.

§ 9

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Sir Thomas Browne

Sir Thomas Browne, the author of the famous *Religio Medici,* was the son of a mercer, and was born in Cheapside in 1605. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, studied medicine for some years on the Continent, and practised at Norwich, where he lived for over forty years. The *Religio Medici* was translated into French, Dutch, German, and Italian during its author's lifetime. Thomas Browne also wrote *Christian Morals, Letter to a Friend,* and *Urn Burial.* Browne was a deliberate stylist, that is to say, like Henry James, he cared more for manner than for matter. He loved to embroider, and he

embroidered with extraordinary skill. He was more an elaborate literary artist than either a scientist or a philosopher.

The *Religio Medici* begins with a profession of Christian faith—"I dare without usurpation assume the honorable style of a Christian." It is a philosophic disquisition on the mysteries of life and death, and the following extract indicates Sir Thomas Browne's line of thought:

> Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn but an hospital, and a place not to live but to die in. The world that I regard is my self; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I can cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and my fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas his shoulders.
>
> The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end, cannot persuade me I have any . . . . Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us—something that was before the heavens, and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and hath yet to begin the alphabet of man.

A Difficult Writer

Thomas Browne was a difficult writer. Mr. Edmund Gosse has said of him: "Browne was greatly interested in the beauty of words, in their sound, their form, the image that they raised. But his treatment of them was very curious, and is not easily or completely to be justified. There was something ab-

normal in Browne's intellect, and it is shown in the rather mad way in which he tossed words about."

He apologised for writing in English rather than in Latin, and his idea of elegant English was a language full of latinised words only to be understood by readers who are masters of the Latin language. This affectation and his general attitude to life enraged Hazlitt, who wrote of him: "His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and the imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of pasteboard. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets." Charles Lamb, however, said that Thomas Browne was one of the worthies "whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them."

Carlyle said: "The conclusion of the essay on *Urn Burial* is absolutely beautiful: a still elegiac mood, so soft, so deep, so solemn and tender, like the song of some departed saint flitting faint under the everlasting canopy of night—an echo of deepest meaning from the great and mighty nations of the dead." And Mr. George Saintsbury says of the same essay:

> A chapter on funeral ceremonials, beliefs in immortality or annihilation and the like follows, and leads up to the ever-memorable finale, beginning, "Now since these dead bones," which has rung in the ears of some eight generations as the very and unsurpassable Dead March of English Prose. Every word of this chapter is memorable, and almost every word abides in the memory by dint of Browne's marmoreal phrase, his great and grave meaning, and the wonderful clangour and echo of his word-music. "Time, which antiquates antiquities," will have some difficulty in destroying this. And through all the chapter his style, like his theme, rises, till after a wonderful burst of mysticism, we are left with such a dying close as never had been heard in English before, "ready to be anything in the

ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as with the moles of Adrianus."

The first edition of *Religio Medici* was published in 1642. Browne had an obvious influence on the style of Dr. Jonson, who wrote a life of him, and modern critics are taking a new interest in his subtle and beautiful mind.

Several of the writers dealt with in this section lived through the Commonwealth and after the Restoration, but they may all be regarded as belonging in essentials to the first half of their century. Charles I was beheaded in 1649. Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector in 1653, and the literary glory of the Cromwellian period and of the entire seventeenth century interest in his subtle and beautiful mind.

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XII

JOHN MILTON

By John Drinkwater

JOHN MILTON

By John Drinkwater

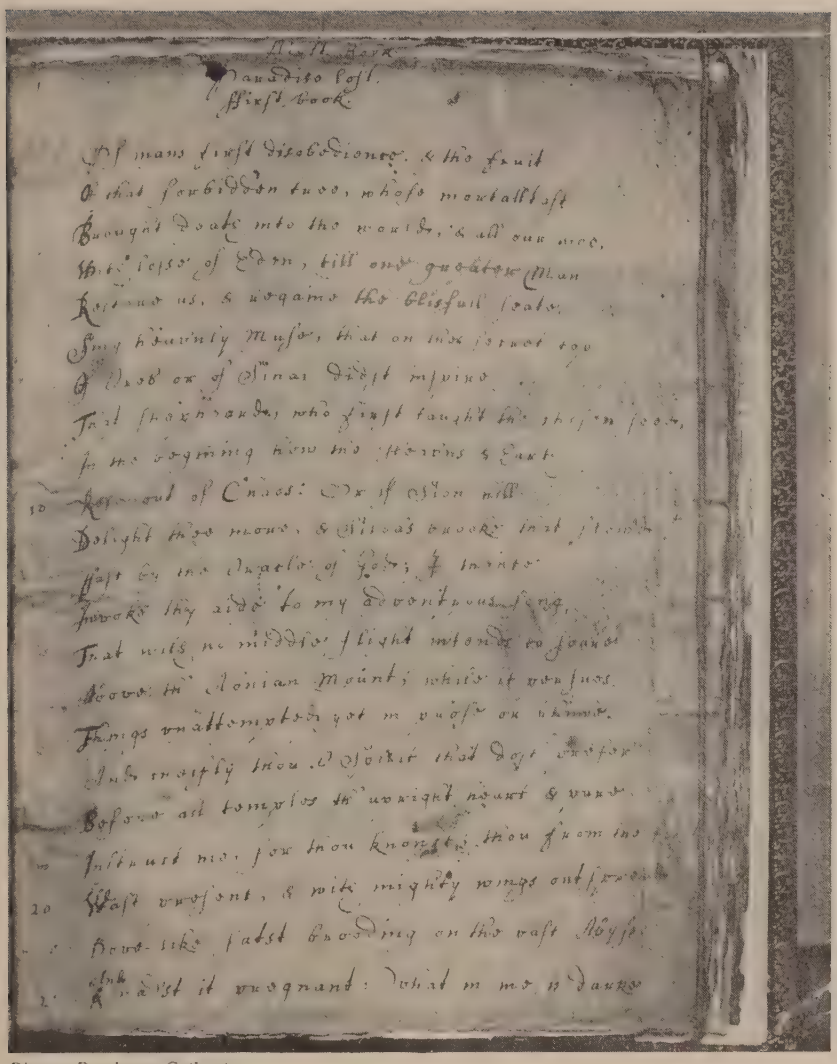
A Great Poet

JOHN MILTON, by common consent of critical opinion, holds a place among the first three great English poets. This is not to say that there are not a dozen, or even twenty, writers in the succession of English poetry who at times in individual quality touch a height equal to Milton's own. The word great is one that is commonly used about poets, often too easily, and generally, I suppose, with a difference. What is meant at the moment is that Milton stands pre-eminently for a very important kind of achievement in poetry, and, so far as can be seen in perspective up to our own day, there are hardly more than two other poets of whom the same thing can so definitely be said. There were many poets among the Elizabethans who in their best moments had as clearly the stuff of poetry in them as Shakespeare himself, but in breadth and consistency of performance Shakespeare transcends them all. It may be said that there is nothing which they did that he did not do as well and generally better. He was the chief and crowning glory of a vast range of poetic activity, practised by many men of great endowments, and, profiting as he did by their efforts and example, he brought the whole movement to its most perfect expression. So that, both by his personal quality and the actual volume of his work, it is of Shakespeare that we think instinctively as *the* great poet of his time. Because his time hap-

pened to be one of peculiar virtue as an inspiration to poetry, a time when the nation, both in adventure and culture, was first becoming delightedly aware of its own splendour and vitality, and was content to enjoy the spectacle of life, and share in its ardours purely for their own invigorating sake, without reducing them to moral or social problems, he comes to our minds always, perhaps, as the greatest poet of all. After him there are two other poets in the English story of whom something of the same kind may be said, John Milton and William Wordsworth.[1] Circumstances of history made it impossible for either of these to inform their work with quite the same happy ease of spiritual youth that marks even the tragedies of Shakespeare, but each in his own way pre-eminently stood for one of the great natural movements in English poetry. After Wordsworth there is no poet of whom we can yet be quite sure in this matter. There are many whose work is certain of individual fame for ever, but none of whom we can yet say that he, above all others, most clearly embodied that strange urge in one direction which underlies all the manifold workings of an epoch.

John Milton's claim to greatness by this standard rests, to put it very briefly, on his unwearying desire, implicit through all his work and once plainly confessed, "to justify the ways of God to men." The whole Puritan revolutionary movement in England was something more than a protest against the evil doing of Charles the First. That was the occasion of its immediate expression in arms, but behind it all there was something far more constructive than this indignation, splendid though that was. The Elizabethan age—the accepted definition is as good as another—had been one of immense unquestioning activity. Physical adventure, the crossing of great seas in small boats, a childlike gaiety of response to the colour and arrogance of Renaissance culture that poured into the mind of the country from Italy, it was all a very festival of ardent and powerful

[1] Critical opinion usually puts Chaucer after Shakespeare and Milton.—J. E.



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PART OF THE ORIGINAL MS. OF "PARADISE LOST"

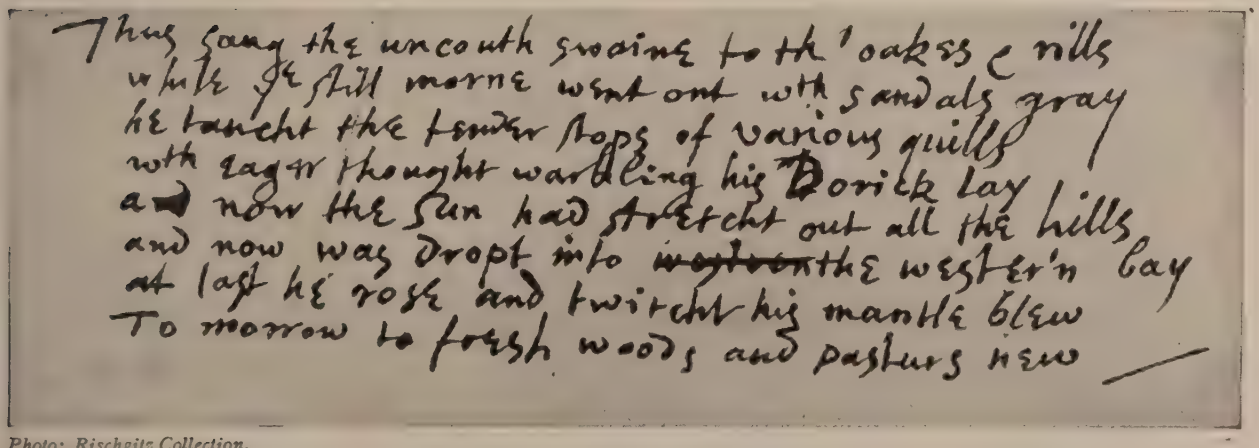
Thus sang the uncouth swaining to th' oakes & rills
while the still morne went out with sandals gray
he tauncht the tender stops of various quills
with eager thought warbling his Dorick lay
and now the sun had stretcht out all the hills
and now was dropt into the wester'n bay
at last he rose and twitcht his mantle blew
To morrow to fresh woods and pastures new

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

CONCLUDING LINES OF MILTON'S "LYCIDAS"

From the original MS. draft in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

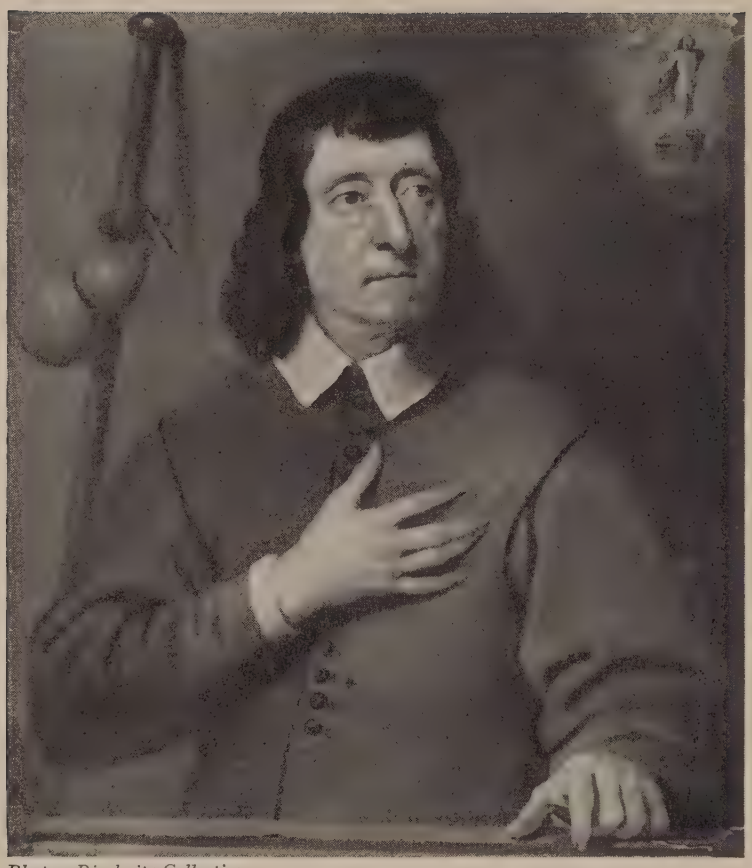

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN MILTON, PAINTED BY PICTER VAN DER PLAAS

National Portrait Gallery, London.

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MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT ST. GILES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

youth. That, we know, is not the complete story, or, rather, a story with no need of qualification. Squalor and pedantry and mincing logic were not unknown, but these were accidental to, and not characteristic of, the time, which remained essentially one of eager and unquestioning joy in life, a finely irresponsible joy it may almost be said. When this impulse had spent itself, and the magnificence of youth had passed, there followed a time when the conscience of the nation became a deliberate thing, setting itself to assess the ardours of a day now gone. It was this spirit of argued judgment as distinguished from simple and delighted acceptance, that was at the very roots of the whole Puritan revolution in England. It was not necessarily an angry judgment nor a self-righteous one, nor even a grudging one, but it was judgment, and its high priest was John Milton.

§ 1

Milton's Life

The outline of Milton's life may be told in a few words. The son of a middle-class family, he was born in London in 1608, was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1629, wrote most of his shorter poems, including *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso, Comus* and *Lycidas,* before he was thirty, went on the Continental Tour, and at the age of thirty-two, having become the tutor of his nephews, he seemed to have forsaken poetry for political and social pamphleteering. He signalised his marriage to Mary Powell in 1643 by a pamphlet on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*—not, it may be said, without very considerable provocation [1]—which was followed by *Areopagitica* in 1644. In

[1] Students of Milton are beginning to doubt the legend that the divorce tracts were occasioned by unhappiness in his own marriage. They point out the fact that domestic relations were a matter of wide and heated discussion before Milton joined in the argument, and it may well be that his own account of the tracts, in a famous but not too conclusive passage in the *Second Defense of the People of England,* means that the tracts were planned or even written before his marriage, and that the

1649, after the execution of the King, he was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State, and continued his controversial writing with *Eikonoklastes,* a reply to the King's book, and other essays which contain some of the finest and most vehement, if not best-tempered, prose in the language. His blindness began in 1651, and among his secretarial assistants was the poet Andrew Marvell. Losing his official position at the Restoration, he was for a time in hiding. He married for a second time in 1656, and again a third in 1662. His remaining years were spent partly at Chalfont St. Giles and partly in London; he died at the age of sixty-six in 1674, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate.

In 1645 he had collected his smaller poems for publication, and a second edition of the volume was issued with additions in 1673. His great works were published, *Paradise Lost* in 1667, and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671. He is supposed to have begun writing the first of these as early as 1650, and the story of his dictating his masterpieces to his daughters is well known. His long silence as a poet in the middle of his life is difficult to explain, preoccupied though he may have been with political matters. We may, however, be sure that during the years when he was not actively writing poetry he was meditating the great work in front of him and

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domestic troubles to which he refers were not personal to himself, but only in the general unhappiness of the times: "When, therefore, I perceived that there were three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life—religious, domestic, and civil and as I had already written concerning the first, and the magistrates were strenuously active in obtaining the third, I determined to turn my attention to the second, or the domestic species. As this seemed to involve three material questions, the conditions of the conjugal tie, the education of the children, and the free publication of the thoughts, I made them objects of distinct consideration. I explained my sentiments, not only concerning the solemnization of the marriage, but the dissolution, if circumstances rendered it necessary; and I drew my arguments from the divine law, which Christ did not abolish, or publish another more grievous than that of Moses. . . . On this subject, therefore, I published some books which were particularly necessary at that time, when man and wife were often the most inveterate foes, when the man often staid to take care of his children at home, while the mother of the family was seen in the camp of the enemy, threatening death and destruction to her husband."—J. E.

preparing himself for a task as to the responsibility of which he was very deliberately conscious. His muse was to address itself to "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." And, as he tells us in his *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1641), he believed that "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."

He came to the composition of the great works of his later years a good scholar, the chief intellectual champion in his country of political and religious freedom, and a man deeply versed in the sorrows and disillusions of life. In taking for his themes the fall of Satan, the redemption of the world by the Son of Man, and the sufferings of Samson, he was following the example of the Greeks in choosing stories which should be familiar to his readers. The mere invention of a fable as an exercise for his genius appealed to him no more than it did to Shakespeare, and he preferred to lavish the vast stores of his energy upon the spiritual and imaginative significance with which the mould of accepted fables could be filled. The literature which has grown up round these poems in itself forms a library of theology, poetics, and philosophy.

§ 2

The Spell of Milton

To attempt anything like an analysis of the vast subject-matter of Milton's writings is here obviously impossible. Of the poetry itself it may at once be said that it cannot be approached profitably in any light or easy mood. Once to have come under the spell of the serene mastery of Milton's genius is to be made free of it forever. It is impossible once to like Milton's poetry and then to grow tired of it, but it may well sometimes be that a reader who is happy enough with some tripping or homely muse should find the ceremony of the great Puritan a little difficult, though *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,*

together with passages from *Comus* and *Lycidas,* can hardly fail to be pleasing to anybody. But for the rest of us there comes a time when the full glory of Milton's last period is a thing in life as inevitable in its authority as the beauty of nature itself. Matthew Arnold's "Others abide our question, thou art free" is as true of the other supreme poets as it is of Shakespeare. If we have the love of English poetry in our blood at all, we can no longer argue about:

> Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
> Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
> That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
> In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
> Rose out of Chaos; or if Sion hill
> Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
> Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
> Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
> That with no middle flight intends to soar
> Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
> Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
>
> And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples, th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
> Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
> Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss.
> And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
> Illumine, what is low raise and support;
> That to the height of this great argument
> I may assert eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.

This spiritual exaltation Milton in his later works maintained, with hardly a break, for something like fifteen thousand lines. In doing it he achieved a style which in its union of

Photo: Fredk. Hollyer. *From the painting by G. F. Watts.*

"SAMSON AGONISTES"

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"MARVELL'S LAST MEETING WITH MILTON," BY G. H. BOUGHTON, R.A.

Milton secured his brother poet, Andrew Marvell, a position under the Commonwealth Government.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN MILTON COMPOSING "PARADISE LOST"

After Munkacsy.

The poet had become blind and dictated to his daughter.

opulence and severity was at the time, and has remained, without parallel. As always with the great men, the poetry transcends the argument. The argument was indeed a passionate enough conviction with Milton himself, and was the foundation from which the mighty edifice of his poetry rose. But it is the poetry itself that, in the right mood, is a defence against the ignominies of the world as hardly any other English poetry is. Milton did very ardently wish to "justify the ways of God to men," to scourge tyranny, and to exalt the undying heroism of man. But in these things he was but one of many thousand generous spirits who have passed on earth, and his testament was made in terms of a mythology and a political temper which in themselves are not very intimately stirring things to us today. But, unlike those other thousands, Milton was a great poet, and, as such, he both transcended forever the conditions of the moment and lifted his personal passion into universal poise by the sublime certainty with which it was embodied. Poise—that is the last word when all critical analysis of Milton has been made. To read *Paradise Lost* or *Samson Agonistes,* without haste and without question, is to look upon the troubled world with untroubled eyes. The purging is not of the same kind as that affected by the great poets of the tragic human emotions, where the salvation is wrought by the spectator being moved to a God-like compassion for suffering or erring man. Reading one of the great Shakespeare tragedies we are so touched to pity that we not only feel that in the course of justice there ought to be some final compensation for the disaster which we have witnessed, but that in some strange way we have been given the power to will that it shall be so. Milton, even in *Samson Agonistes,* where the actual fable is one of human catastrophe, does not move us in quite the same way. Here we feel not so much as we do in Shakespeare's tragedies that when all has been endured mercy will come, as it were, from some common impulse of the world to heal even the most merited

suffering, but that the spirit of man can mysteriously rise clear of its own limitations and that man is, in fact, greater than the expression that he can ever give to himself in the conduct of life. Shakespeare's way is the more human, the more passionate, and the more intimately related to our common moods, but there are times when Milton can bring us a reassurance that is altogether his own.

The keen spiritual light that is over all Milton's meditation does not lessen the warmth of his humanity, a quality we are apt to forget was his when we think of him. His early poems, though they are marked already by the ceremony that in the great works was to come to such grandeur of style, are the work of a young poet moving freely about the world, generous and even gay in temper. Whatever his austerity of manner, there was no coldness at the heart of the man who could write:

> While the ploughman near at hand
> Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
> And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
> And the mower whets his scythe,
> And every shepherd tells his tale
> Under the hawthorn in the dale. . . .

Nor, when *Paradise Lost* appeared more than twenty years later, had the note gone:

> So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
> That ever since in love's embraces met;
> Adam the goodliest man of men since born
> His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.
> Under a tuft of shade, that on a green
> Stood whisp'ring soft, by a fresh fountain side
> They sat them down; and after no more toil
> Of their sweet gard'ning labour than sufficed
> To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease
> More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
> More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell. . . .

a passage the tenderness of which is recurrent throughout the poem whenever Milton's thought for a moment leaves the height of its great argument and dwells on the human joys and sorrows of Paradise. While, however, he is thus always able to remind us of his command of the gentler things of holiday and pathos, it remains the truth that it is in a sublime philosophic conception of life, rather than in the particular and intimate lives of men and women, that his interest chiefly lies and in the expression of which his mastery is most commonly used.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

There at twenty-three was already the promise of the poet who in the full maturity of his power was to learn how, by pure majesty of spirit and the very magic of verse, to bring even angels into the range of our human sympathies, as in:

So spake the seraph Abdiel, faithful found,
Among the faithless, faithful only he:
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single. . . .

and who, when he brought these faculties to a life still generalised, but nearer to our own experience, as at the end of *Samson Agonistes,* could achieve a moving beauty which has never been excelled in English poetry:

> Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble. . . .

Any page of Milton will furnish examples of his mastery. Our choice might follow Swinburne, who finds an incomparable excellence of direction in the opening of *Lycidas:*

> Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
> Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
> I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
> And with forced fingers rude,
> Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. . . .

or Keats, who says:

"There are two specimens of very extraordinary beauty in the *Paradise Lost:* they are of a nature, so far as I have read, unexampled elsewhere; they are entirely distinct from the brief pathos of Dante and they are not to be found even in Shakespeare. The one is in line 268, iv:

> Not that fair field
> Of Enna, where Proserpine, gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world.

The other is line 32, book viii:

> But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
> Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
> Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
> In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
> To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned
> Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
> Her son.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MILTON DICTATING "SAMSON AGONISTES"

From a painting by J. C. Horsley, R.A.

These appear exclusively Miltonic, without the shadow of another mind, ancient or modern."

De Quincey, who held Milton to be the greatest poet of all time—who somewhere speaks of "the solemn planetary wheelings of the verse of Milton"—selected as "his most tremendous passage—perhaps the most sublime, all things considered, that exists in human literature," the lines (273, bk. x), where Death first becomes aware of his own future empire over man:

> So saying, with delight he snuffed the smell
> Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock
> Of ravenous fowl, through many a league remote,
> Against the day of battle, to a field,
> Where armies lie encamped, come flying, lured.
> So scented the grim feature, and upturned
> His nostril wide into the murky air,
> Sagacious of his quarry from so far.

§ 3

How to Read Milton

Although, more perhaps than most poets, Milton allowed a life of affairs to encroach upon his actual poetical composition, there is no poet of whom it can be more justly said that he devoted his life to poetry. Having proved his gifts in the early poems, he determined to wait until such time as he felt himself to be equipped for a work that should not only be profound in conception but massive in volume and architecture. "Neither do I think it shame," he writes in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelatry* of 1641, "to covenant with any knowing reader that, for some years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine . . . but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge . . . to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight

into all seemly and generous art and affairs. . . ." Through those years of political and religious controversy his mind was fixed constantly upon the redemption of this promise. The result of all this was that when the works came they were upon a scale that can be no more lightly apprehended by the reader than they were lightly conceived by the poet. Before we can come to anything like the full significance of Milton's great poems we must read them steadily and we must read them whole.

We may for purposes of argument do very well in dividing poets up into schools, Classical, Romantic, Realist, and so forth, but when we come to the very great men we find that in some measure or another they have the best qualities of all these different kinds. Nowhere has the case for the so-called Classic as against the Romantic method been put more lucidly, than in Matthew Arnold's famous *Preface* of 1853.

"We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who enquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total-impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their

poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity."

This is an admirable piece of æsthetic theory, and it was a point that very much needed to be made, and for that matter still needs to be made today in view of the common practice of modern poetry. But the argument is one which when we come to the poets themselves in their poetry—even to Matthew Arnold in his own poetry—we find to need qualification. It is true that certain poets, chiefly lyric poets, do make good their claim to our remembrance almost entirely because of the occasional verbal felicities of which Arnold speaks, and they do not achieve, or, perhaps, even aim at, that "total-impression" which the critic so rightly holds up to admiration. But this does not mean that the poets who are masters of proportion and form on the grand scale are indifferent to the appeal of those same verbal felicities. How, for example, would Arnold account for Keats in his reckoning? The form of the *Odes,* although it is of small dimensions, has decided grandeur, and the "total-impression" is emphatic and lasting. And yet Keats took the greatest pains to "load every rift with ore." There is hardly a line without some exquisite touch of the kind that Arnold, in his enthusiasm for classic purity, seems almost to censure. As I have pointed out, no poetry could be more suggestive in this matter than Arnold's own, where the general effect is always kept in view with scrupulous loyalty to the poet's belief, but where "showers of isolated thoughts and images" are constantly breaking upon the design to our great profit.

In Milton this richness of phrase, beautiful even apart from its context, is constant. "'The tann'd haycock in the mead," "the glowing violet," "brisk as the April buds in Primrose season," "beauty is Nature's brag," "they also serve who only stand and wait," "the marble air," "And from sweet kernels prest She tempers dulcet creams," "and calm of mind all passion spent"—such things come to the eye on almost any page.

Great and essential as the complete design is, it is not difficult ever to make Milton's inspiration clear by short passages, even phrases. But the design remains, to be discovered only by the patient and humble reader. Once to behold it, in all its lordly power and grace, is to rejoice in one of the sublime achievements of English character and of English poetry.

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XIII

MARVELL AND WALTON

MARVELL AND WALTON

§ 1

Andrew Marvell

ANDREW MARVELL, the friend of Milton, is generally called a Puritan poet, although his sympathies were largely with Charles I, and he wrote satires on the Long Parliament. Some of his noblest lines were written on Cromwell's death:

> I saw him dead: a leaden slumber lies,
> And mortal sleep over those wakeful eyes;
> Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,
> Which through his looks that piercing sweetness shed;
> That port, which so majestic was as strong,
> Loose, and deprived of vigour, stretched along;
> All withered, all discoloured, pale and wan,
> How much another thing, no more that man!
> O, human glory vain! O, Death! O, wings!
> O, worthless world! O, transitory things!
> Yet dwelt that greatness in his shape decayed,
> That still though dead, greater than Death he laid,
> And in his altered face you something feign
> That threatens Death, he yet will live again.

Though we now read him for his lyrics, Marvell was a master satirist, and in that kind of writing is sometimes not far behind Dryden himself. Marvell was an open-air man, joying in gardens and woods, rivers and birds. No English poet, indeed, has loved Nature more than he. Descriptions of the countryside, with observations of its various characteristic features, and

appreciations of its peculiar charm and beauty, figure largely throughout English literature. Spenser, Shakespeare, Herrick, and our contemporaries Hardy and Masefield, are but a few of the great writers who, in the course of their works, frequently convey the true spirit, as well as accurate portraits, of country life.

§ 2

There is a group of writers who have specially devoted themselves to portraying and interpreting the sight and sounds and atmosphere of the country and its natural inhabitants.

"The Compleat Angler"

The first in order of time is Izaak Walton, born in 1593, whose *Compleat Angler* appeared in 1653, the author being then in his sixtieth year. From his youth upwards, his associates were of the cultivated class, his first wife being a descendant of Cranmer, and his second wife half-sister to Thomas Ken, the celebrated Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1618, we find his name on the roll of the Ironmongers' Company, though what his actual business in London was, is not clear. Whatever it was, it enabled him to retire, free from financial anxiety, in 1644. After his retirement he lived for forty years; and it was during this period that the *Compleat Angler* and the *Lives* of his friends Donne, Wotton, and other almost equally distinguished men, were written.

The *Compleat Angler* is obviously the work of a writer who had reached the age of serenity. The postscript which appears at the end of the last page, "Study to be Quiet," is the keynote to the whole. It is professedly and, to a large extent actually, a practical handbook of the angler's art; but it is very much more than that. The book's sub-title, *The Contemplative Man's Recreation,* gives a hint of Walton's attitude both to angling and to life in general; and, as he says in his preface, "the whole

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

IZAAK WALTON, BY JACOB HUYSMAN

National Portrait Gallery, London.

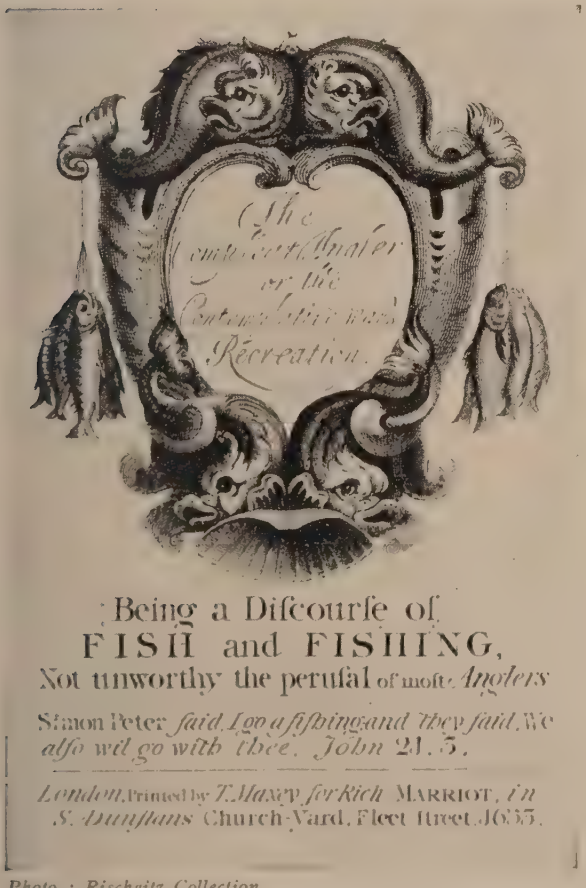
The
Contemplative Man's
Recreation.
Being a Diſcourſe of
FISH and FISHING,
Not unworthy the peruſal of moſt Anglers
Simon Peter ſaid, I go a fishing and they ſaid, We
alſo wil go with thee. John 21. 3.
London, Printed by T. Maxey for Rich. MARRIOT, in
S. Dunſtans Church-Yard, Fleet ſtreet. 1653.

Photo : Rischgitz Collection.

TITLE-PAGE, FIRST EDITION *THE COMPLEAT ANGLER*, IZAAK WALTON

Photo : by kind permission of The Sphere.

ANDREW MARVELL, FROM THE PAINTING BY ADRIAN HANNEMAN. (Dated 1658.)

City Art Gallery, Hull.

Discourse is, or rather was, a picture of my own disposition, especially in such days and times as I have laid aside business, and gone a-fishing with honest Nat. and R. Roe." Thus we find pleasantly and whimsically intermingled practical advice on baits, recipes for cooking fish, and reflections on life, the characteristic note of all being one of thankfulness and appreciation. "Well," he says to his companion, "having now taught you to paint your rod, and we having still a mile to Tottenham High Cross, I will, as we walk towards it in the cool shade of this sweet honeysuckle hedge, mention to you some of the thoughts and joys that have possest my soul since we two met together."

The features of the country that peculiarly appeal to Walton are its quiet and restfulness, its sweetness and peaceful beauty, its calm associations. Although he comments repeatedly on bird and fish, his attitude to them is an anthropomorphic one. He has little of the spirit of the naturalist. He contemplates, rather than studies, nature. He quotes with acquiescence the statements of previous writers on natural history, and rarely observes for himself that the facts are far other. He is so filled with admiration and love of it all that only occasionally he notices the details. His country is the country of the Londoner, but not the Londoner of today. He is citizen of that London,

> small and white and clean,
> The clear Thames gliding 'twixt her gardens green,

which had the fields and woods within an easy walk; whose shopkeepers and merchants were still familiar with country sights and sounds, if not with the actual detail of country life. The Angler knows the birds and beasts and flowers by look and song and name; he takes pleasure in the sight of wood and stream, but it is the surface of these things that attracts and strikes him. Country life is to him the milkmaid and her mother singing an old catch among the flowers; the lavendered sheets in the alehouse; the barking of the hounds as the otter turns at bay in the

water-meadows "chequered with water-lilies and lady-smocks." It is like a beautifully decorated manuscript, where allegory and axiom and morality are pictured in gold and colours, and it matters little to him whether or not his natural history is true in fact, if he can draw from it an example of the love or wisdom of his Maker.

Peace and Quietude

Certainly, his picture of the countryside is one which would turn a man's mind to peace and quietude. There is no hint of the other side of rain and hunger and hard work. His very beggars sit under a honeysuckle hedge propounding riddles and singing songs in turn; a wet day is only an excuse for a game of shovel-board at an honest ale-house, and a rainy evening gives an opportunity to read "the following Discourse." It is an Arcadian scene, but so charming and so delicately drawn that it almost convinces us of its reality.

No short biography in our literature stands higher than Walton's *Lives* already referred to. The following passage from the life of Sanderson illustrated the homely natural style of Walton:

> I met him accidentally in London, in sad-coloured clothes, and, God knows, far from being costly. The place of our meeting was near to Little Britain, where he had been to buy a book, which he then had in his hand. We had no inclination to part presently, and therefore turned to stand in a corner under a pent-house—for it began to rain—and immediately the wind rose, and the rain increased so much, that both became so inconvenient as to force us into a cleanly house, where we had bread, cheese, ale, and a fire for our money. This rain and wind were so obliging to me, as to force our stay there for at least an hour, to my great content and advantage; for in that time he made to me many useful observations, with much clearness and conscientious freedom.

Walton then relates some of Sanderson's talk. He lamented the Parliament's attacks on the Liturgy and the growing use of extempore prayers in churches.

Walton's *Lives* are not only gems of biography, they are an education in human love and fine feeling. They are one of Dr. Johnson's favourite books; and Wordsworth wrote of them:

> The feather, whence the pen
> Was shaped that traced the lives of these good men,
> Dropped from an Angel's wing.

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XIV

JOHN BUNYAN

JOHN BUNYAN

§ 1

IF Milton stands in literature for Puritan culture, Bunyan stands for Puritan fervour.

The Pilgrim's Progress is a human drama. Most allegories are fantastic and many of them are apt to be tedious. But Bunyan is always dramatic. His allegory is ingenious in its contruction and seasoned by homely wit, and it has, as Macaulay said, been "read by many thousands with tears." The critic of letters has been moved by *The Pilgrim's Progress* to enthusiasm. Dr. Johnson hated to read books through, but he made an exception of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Indeed, he wished it were longer.

Bunyan, Macaulay says, was "almost the only writer who ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete." His mind was so imaginative that "personifications, when he dealt with them, became men." His mind was so dramatic that a dialogue between two qualities in *The Pilgrim's Progress* has a more convincing realism than "a dialogue between two human beings in most plays." And what a marvel it is that this great book should have been written by a tinker, and the son of a tinker, who himself has told us: "I never went to school, to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's house in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen."

Not only was John Bunyan a great writer born with a complete power of expression, he was, and he remains, the

spokesman of the people articulate among the generally inarticulate, one of the two great English writers (Dickens was the other) who belonged to the common people, loved the common people, and possessed a perfect knowledge of what the common people dream and hope and fear.

Bunyan's Life

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, a village near Bedford, in 1628; the son of "an honest poor labouring man, who, like Adam unparadised, had all the world to get his bread in, and was very careful to maintain his family." He was sent to the Grammar School at Bedford, where he was taught "to read and write, according to the rate of other poor men's children." After he left school, his father taught him his own trade of a tinker, and he went on living in Elstow. Bunyan was a passionate and imaginative boy, the ringleader in most of the village mischief. After his conversion, he was fond of referring in lurid terms to the wickedness of his youth, but there is little doubt that this wickedness was grotesquely exaggerated. In our days at every Salvation Army meeting, one can hear from the simple converted obviously over-coloured accounts of sins committed in unregenerate days. This is indeed quite natural, nothing more than perfectly harmless vanity, as well as the desire to emphasise the "saving power of grace." Bunyan tells us that he swore and lied and poached and robbed orchards. But he was never drunk, and he more than once declares that he was never unchaste. However great a sinner Bunyan may have been, he suffered grievously for his sins. The English people in the seventeenth century had learned to read the Bible, which they accepted literally, and Bunyan, as a boy, was convinced that the sins he committed would bring him awful and eternal punishment. Like Joan of Arc he had visions, and all his visions were prophecies of torment.

At the beginning of the Civil War Bunyan served as a

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"CHRISTIAN" IS TROUBLED

From the etching by William Strang.

Christian's family did not understand him. "Sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him: Wherefore he began to retire himself to his Chamber, to pray for and pity them; and also to condole his own misery."

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"BUNYAN AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-SIX," BY THOS. SADLER

National Portrait Gallery, London.

By permission of The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

From the etching by Willam Strang.

"*Christian* went on his Way, but still with his Sword drawn in his hand, for fear lest he should be assaulted."

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE WIFE OF BUNYAN INTERCEDING FOR HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON

After G. Duvall.

soldier. His soldiering lasted only a year, and then he went back to Elstow and married. He says:

> I lighted on a wife whose father was counted godly. We came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between us. But she had for her portion two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety,* which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I sometimes read with her. I found some things pleasing to me, but all this while I met with no conviction. She often told me what a godly man her father was, how he would reprove and correct vice both in his house and among his neighbours, what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed. These books, though they did not reach my heart, did light in me some desire to religion.

At this time of his life Bunyan was a regular attendant at the parish church, though "retaining my wicked life." He read the Bible, grieved for his sins, and was miserably unhappy, finding nowhere any hope or any satisfaction. Then light came to him miraculously as it came to St. Paul. He writes:

> One day as I was tra[illegible]lling into the country, musing on the wickedness of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me to God, the Scripture came into my mind, "He hath made peace through the blood of His cross." I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other. I was ready to swoon, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

Bunyan joined the Baptist Congregation in Bedford, and was baptised in the River Ouse. Soon after his conversion, Bunyan began to preach, and in a very short time he gained a great reputation among the sects which in the middle of the seventeenth century were, as Froude says, "springing up all over England as weeds in a hotbed."

The Act of Uniformity, passed after the Restoration, made

the meetings of the Protestant sects illegal, and also made non-attendance at the parish church a crime. The meeting-houses were shut up, and the Dissenters met together for worship in woods and outhouses, always fearing arrest. Bunyan himself was arrested on November 12, 1660.

His Imprisonment

The Bedford magistrates were most unwilling to send Bunyan to prison. They tried hard to persuade him to promise not to preach in public, but Bunyan would not compromise, and would give no promises. And most reluctantly the magistrates committed him to Bedford gaol, where he stayed for twelve years. The imprisonment of Bunyan is a curious story. Not only the local magistrates, but even the High Court judges in London, tried in vain to get him out of prison. He could have left at any moment by giving a simple promise, but this was against his conscience. After six years he was actually released under the Declaration of Indulgence, and was promptly re-arrested for preaching. After another six years the policy of the Government changed, and one of the most famous imprisonments in history came to an end. It seems perfectly clear that the rigour of his punishment has been grossly exaggerated. His family and his friends were allowed to see him whenever they liked; he was permitted to preach in prison—since that was a private place—he was even able to go out of the prison practically every day. Without these years of restricted activity Bunyan would probably never have been anything more than an effective and successful preacher. Prison gave him time to read, to think, and to write. In Bedford gaol Bunyan read and re-read the Bible, read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* George Herbert's devotional poems, and probably the *Faery Queen* and *Paradise Lost.* In Bedford gaol he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,* and the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Bunyan was released on May 8, 1672. He was then forty-four years old.

§ 2

Various Writings

In the years that followed his imprisonment, Bunyan wrote a *Discourse upon Anti-Christ, The Life and Death of Mr. Badman,* the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* and *The Holy War,* as well as a considerable quantity of verse. The verse, if never poetry of any value, is often ingenious, neat, and quaint, especially the famous "He that is down need fear no fall," in *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

Grace Abounding is an autobiography detailing the spiritual struggles which have already been described. It deserves to be more widely known than it is; not only is it a masterpiece among those books called "confessions," but it might pass to-day for a first-rate novel of the psychological type, full of outward movement and of spiritual insight. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* consists of a dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, in which we are told the story of an unscrupulous and successful scoundrel who lived evilly and died unrepentant. Although Bunyan knew nothing about art, he was instinctively too fine an artist to spoil his story, interesting and valuable as a picture of English life under the later Stuarts, by a melodramatic deathbed repentance:

> When he drew near his end, there was no more alteration in him than what was made by his disease upon his body. He was the selfsame Mr. Badman still, not only in name, but in condition, and that to the very day of his death and the moment in which he died. There seemed not to be in it to the standers by so much as a strong struggle of nature. He died like a lamb, or, as men call it, like a chrisom child, quietly and without fear.

The Holy War is a much more involved and a much less effective allegory than *The Pilgrim's Progress.* It is a description of the struggle for the possession of the city of Mansoul between

the forces of evil and the forces of good, between the devil and Christ. The actors in the drama are virtues and vices. The narrative is too long. It would have been more effective if it had concluded with the capture of Mansoul by Emmanuel and the defeat and punishment of the Diabolians. But Bunyan evidently wanted to impress his readers with the fact that until the day of his death the Christian is liable to the assaults of the devil. The trouble with *The Holy War* is that it is not easy to determine exactly what Bunyan meant. Froude says:

> Here lies the real weakness of *The Holy War*. It may be looked at either as the war in the soul of each sinner that is saved, or as the war for the deliverance of humanity. Under the first aspect it leaves out of sight the large majority of mankind who are not supposed to be saved, and out of whom, therefore, Diabolus is not driven at all. Under the other aspect the struggle is still unfinished; the last act of the drama has still to be played, and we know not what the conclusion is to be.

§ 3

"The Pilgrim's Progress"

The Pilgrim's Progress was first published in 1678, as has been said, the first and infinitely the better part having been written in Bedford gaol. After the Bible, it is the most popular book in the English language, and there is no need to recall the incidents of Christian's journey to the Delectable Land. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into every language, and it remains the most beautiful description of Christian experience. Mark Rutherford called Bunyan the poet of Puritanism. He was even more than that, for, with some small excisions, all Christendom has found *The Pilgrim's Progress* not only fine literature but an ethical and mystical stimulant. The story opens with a passage of fine dramatic simplicity: "As I walked

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"CHRISTIAN" AND "HOPEFUL" IN THE DUNGEON

From the etching by William Strang.

"The *Giant* therefore drove them before him, and put them into his castle, in a very dark Dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men."

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"CHRISTIAN" FIGHTS "APOLLYON"

From the etching by William Strang.

"Then *Apollyon*, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to *Christian*, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that *Christian's* sword flew out of his hand."

through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream."

It is interesting to compare this passage with Dante's: "In the middle of life's journey I found myself in a darkling wood, where the traces of the straight path were lost."

One of the most dramatic incidents of the pilgrimage occurred when Christian reached the Valley of Humiliation, where he was confronted by the foul fiend, Apollyon. At first the pilgrim had a mind to go back. But he reflected that "he had no armour for his back" and that it was, therefore, safer to go forward. After a long conversation the fiend swore to "spill" Christian's soul:

> "And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.
>
> "Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him: and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.
>
> "Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now. And with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life; but as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, 'Re-

joice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise' (Micah vii. 8); and with that he gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Rom. viii. 37). And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian for a season saw him no more (James iv. 7)."

The passage in which Bunyan describes the end of Christian's pilgrimage is instinct with unforced beauty:

"Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother, how welcome they were into their company and with what gladness they came to meet them; and now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! And thus they came up to the gate."

In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan describes how Christian's wife and family made the same journey, met the same difficulties, and reached the same goal. Froude is unquestionably right when he points out that in this sequel Bunyan's simplicity is marred by a certain mawkish sentimentality. There are, however, many magnificent passages in this second part, and allegorically it was a master stroke to have Christian's family follow the path he had taken; wishing to show

the power of example, Bunyan can contrast the difficulties of the pioneer with the comparative case of those who come after. In all English literature there is no finer and more inspiring description of the death of the good man than Bunyan's *"So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."*

Bunyan died in 1688. He had travelled on horseback from Bedford to Reading in order to endeavour to compose a family quarrel. He succeeded, but on his journey back he was caught in a storm, which brought on a fever, and he died at a friend's house in London. He was buried in Bunhill Fields. His last words were: "Take me, for I come to Thee."

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XV

PEPYS, DRYDEN, AND THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

PEPYS, DRYDEN, AND THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

§ 1

PEPYS

SAMUEL PEPYS was born in 1633. His father was a shiftless, muddle-headed man who, after being for some years an unsuccessful tailor in London, retired to a village near Huntingdon, where he had inherited a small estate which brought him an income of eighty pounds a year. Samuel was educated at St. Paul's School in London and at Magdalene College, Cambridge; and when he was twenty-two, having little money and no prospects, he married the daughter of an impecunious Protestant refugee who was as irresponsible and unsuccessful as Samuel's father himself.

Soon after his marriage Sir Edward Montagu, afterwards Lord Sandwich, who was a connection of the Pepys family, engaged Samuel as a sort of confidential secretary, and he and his wife were given rooms in Montagu's London house. Years after Pepys recalled how his wife used "to make coal fires, and wash my foul clothes with her own hands," in the early days of their married life.

Pepys held the appointment of "Clerk of the Acts of the Navy," and in 1673 he was appointed Secretary of the Admiralty, retaining his office until the Revolution of 1688 ended his official career. In 1690 he suffered a short imprisonment in

the Tower on a charge of being concerned in some Jacobite intrigue. He died in his house at Clapham in 1703.

The Famous Diary

His famous Diary was begun in January, 1660, and the last entry was made on May 31, 1669, increasing trouble with his eyes preventing the diarist from making further entries. It was written in the system of shorthand invented by one Shelton in 1641, and apparently, in order to keep the more intimate records secret, the shorthand was interspersed with foreign words. The Diary fills six notebooks of about five hundred pages each, the first being an octavo and the rest small quartos. On his death, Pepys left all his papers to Magdalene College, and there they remained unread until 1818. The manuscript was deciphered between 1819 and 1822, and the first edition of Pepys's Diary was published in 1825—a hundred and twenty-two years after his death.

In many respects Pepys's Diary is unique in literature. It contains many passages of intense human and literary interest, in which a very ordinary man has revealed the secret places of the heart. Such self-revealers as St. Augustine, Rousseau, and Bunyan were extraordinary men. But the peculiar charm and value of Pepys is that he was an everyday man who, with infinite labour and infinite enjoyment, recorded the small doings of his daily life. The Dairy is amazingly candid; if nothing is said in malice, certainly nothing is extenuated. He made no attempt to hide his meannesses, his infidelities, or his quarrels with his wife, nor does he hide the fact that he thoroughly enjoyed his peccadilloes. Indeed, the outstanding fact about Pepys is that he thoroughly enjoyed his life, and that he obtained a sort of second enjoyment from recording its incidents, great and small, all of which had given him intense satisfaction.

Although he was a public official, frequently brought into contact with Charles II, and for years working in the Navy

Office in close association with the Duke of York, afterwards James II, he never was inside Court circles. He lived the life of an industrious, fairly honest, middle-class public official, neat, tidy, and industrious, troubled a good deal by his impecunious relations and his wife's improvidence, and as eager to save money as to have a good time. As became a good citizen, Pepys loved a good dinner; nothing pleased him more than to record a satisfactory menu. He wrote in April, 1663:

> "Very merry at, before, and after dinner, and the more for that my dinner was great, and most neatly dressed by our own only maid. We had a fricassee of rabbits and chickens, a leg of mutton boiled, three carps in a dish, a great dish of a side of lamb, a dish of roasted pigeons, a dish of four lobsters, three tarts, a lamprey pie (a most rare pie), a dish of anchovies, good wine of several sorts, and all things mighty noble and to my great content."

Such an entry throws a vivid light on the manners and appetites of the seventeenth century; but it must be remembered that Pepys had only one meal a day. In his day this meal was generally eaten at noon, and was followed by nothing more than the lightest of suppers.

The relations between Pepys and his wife have an intense human interest. He was constantly jealous of her without cause, and he loved to recapitulate the circumstances that would have given her, on her side, ample justification for jealousy. As it happened she was stupid and unsuspecting, until on one unhappy occasion she discovered him making love to her maid. She denounced him as "all the false, rotten-hearted rogues of the world," and he confessed that "I did endure the sorrow of her threats, vows, and curses all the afternoon."

As a Playgoer

After his appointment to the Navy Office Pepys lived in a house close to Tower Hill between Crutched Friars and Seething

Lane and he was there during the Plague and the Great Fire, both of which he describes at length in the Diary. Love-making, theatre-going, and music were Pepys's chief delights. He frequented the taverns of the time mainly for society, for he was by no means intemperate, and he was too frugal to gamble. He shared the common Restoration contempt for Shakespeare. He considered *Romeo and Juliet* the worst play he had ever seen; he called *Othello* "a mean thing," and he declared that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw." The staid and respectable Evelyn had the same opinion of Shakespeare, remarking once after seeing *Hamlet* that "the old plays begin to disgust in this refined age." According to the Diary Pepys saw a hundred and thirty-five different plays, many of them several times. Theatre prices in his day were a shilling, one and six and two and six. Four shillings was the price of a seat in the upper boxes, but Pepys was never guilty of this extravagance till 1667. In 1661 he went to see one of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies, and he notes that it was "the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." He entirely approved of the innovation, eulogising Nell Gwynne's performance in Dryden's *Secret Love,* and praising an actress called Mrs. Knipp as an "excellent mad-humoured thing." Evelyn, by the way, as became his stolid respectability, was of an entirely different opinion. In 1666 he wrote in his Diary: "Very seldom going to the public theatres for many reasons now as they were abused to an atheistical liberty; foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act."

The common idea of a "good time" in the reign of Charles II may be gathered from the entry in Pepys's Diary of August 14, 1666:

> "After dinner, with my wife and Mercer to the Beare Garden; where I have not been, I think, of many years,

and saw some good sport of the bull's tossing the dogs—one into the very boxes. But it is a very rude and nasty pleasure. We had a great many hectors in the same box, and one very fine went into the pit, and played his dog for a wager; which was a strange sport for a gentleman; where they drank wine, and drank Mercer's health first; which I pledged with my hat off. We supped at home, and very merry. And then about nine to Mrs. Mercer's gate, where the fire and boys expected us, and her son had provided abundance of serpents and rockets; and there mighty merry, my Lady Pen and Pegg going thither with us, and Nan Wright, till about twelve at night, flinging our fireworks, and burning one another, and the people over the way.

"And, at last, our business being most spent, we went into Mrs. Mercer's, and there mighty merry, smutting one another with candle grease and soot, till most of us were like devils. And that being done, then we broke up, and to my house; and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went, and then fell into dancing, W. Batelier dancing well; and dressing, him and I, and one Mr. Banister, who, with my wife, came over also with us, like women; and Mercer put on a suit of Tom's, like a boy, and mighty mirth we had, and Mercer danced a jig; and Nan Wright and my wife and Peggy Pen put on perriwigs. Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry; and then parted, and to bed."

Pepys was a good-natured materialist, caring not a little for the good things of this world, but he was not without a certain sincere religion; and while he had little culture and cared little for books, he had a genuine love for music, playing himself on the flageolet. He describes, in 1667, the effect that music has upon him:

"With my wife to the King's House, to see *The Virgin Martyr*, the first time it hath been acted a great while; and it is mighty pleasant; not that the play is worth much, but

it is finely acted by Beck Marshall. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-music when the Angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musick hath that real command over the soul of a man as did this upon me: and makes me resolve to practice wind-music, and to make my wife do the like."

Some Extracts from the Diary

The following are some characteristic extracts from the diary, selected as revealing Pepys's qualities, prejudices, and manner of life. Mr. Pepys minutely records domestic happenings.

"(Lord's day.) To church, and Mr. Mills made a good sermon: so home to dinner. My wife and I all alone to a leg of mutton, the sawce of which being made sweet, I was angry at it, and eat none, but only dined upon the marrow-bone that we had beside."

"Waking this morning out of my sleep on a sudden, I did with my elbow hit my wife a great blow over her face and neck, which waked her with pain, at which I was sorry, and to sleep again."

"Home, and found all well, only myself somewhat vexed at my wife's neglect in leaving of her scarfe, waist-coate, and night-dressings in the coach, to-day, that brought us from Westminster; though, I confess, she did give them to me to look after. It might be as good as 25*s*. loss."

"(Lord's day.) I and my wife up to her closet, to examine her kitchen accounts, and there I took occasion to fall out with her, for her buying a laced handkercher and pinner without my leave. From this we began both to be angry, and so continued till bed."

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON," BY STANHOPE A. FORBES

Vividly described by Evelyn in his Diary.

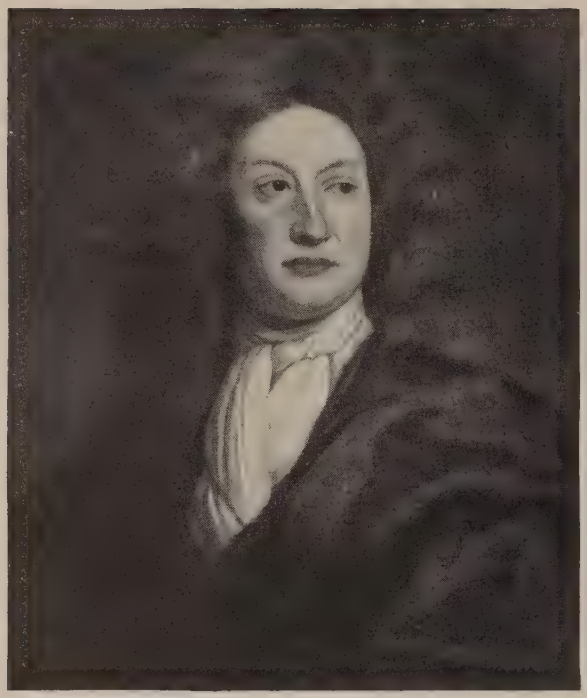


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN DRYDEN, BY KNELLER

National Portrait Gallery, London.

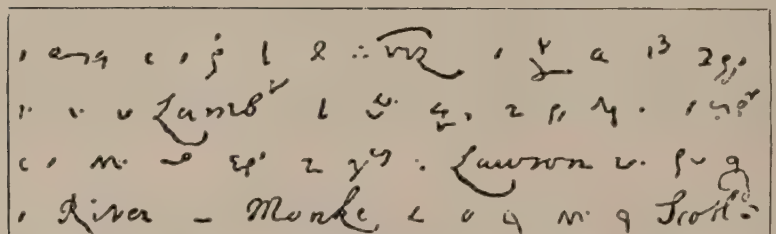
Dryden is the greatest name in English letters from Milton to Pope.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SAMUEL PEPYS, PAINTED AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FOUR BY JOHN HAYLS

National Portrait Gallery, London.

This picture is circumstantially referred to in Pepys's own Diary.



FACSIMILE OF A PARAGRAPH FROM THE DIARY WRITTEN BY PEPYS IN SHORTHAND

"Dined in my wife's chamber, she being much troubled with the tooth-ake, and I staid till a surgeon of hers come, one Leeson, who had formerly drawn her mouth, and he advised her to draw it; so I to the Office, and by and by word is come that she hath drawn it, which pleased me, it being well done. So I home, to comfort her."

The following are some of his reflections on books:

"Up by 4 o'clock in the morning, and read Cicero's Second Oration against Catiline, which pleased me exceedingly; and more I discern therein than ever I thought was to be found in him; but I perceive it was my ignorance, and that he is as good a writer as ever I read in my life."

"I away to my boat, and up with it as far as Barne Elmes, reading of Mr. Evelyn's late new book against Solitude, in which I do not find much excess of good matter, though it be pretty for a bye discourse."

"To the Strand, to my bookseller's, and there bought an idle, rogueish French book, which I have bought in plain binding, avoiding the buying of it better bound, because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found."

Pepys was a regular churchgoer and a stern critic of sermons:

"(Lord's day.) A most tedious, unreasonable, and impertinent sermon, by an Irish doctor. His text was, 'Scatter them, O Lord, that delight in warr.' Sir W. Batten and I very much angry with the parson."

"To church, and had a good plain sermon. At our coming in, the country-people all rose with so much reverence; and when the parson begins, he begins 'Right Worshipfull and dearly beloved' to us."

Pepys lived in troubled times, and wisely kept away from politics. He records, however, the more striking political events that followed the Restoration.

> "I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy. It is said, that he said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now had judged him; and that his wife do expect his coming again. Thus it was my chance to see the King beheaded at White Hall, and to see the first blood shed in revenge for the King at Charing Cross."
>
> "I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched!"

The theatre was Pepys's passion. Here are a few of the many references to it in the Diary:

> "To the Theatre, and there saw *Argalus and Parthenia,* where a woman acted Parthenia, and come afterwards on the stage in men's clothes, and had the best legs that ever I saw, and I was very well pleased with it."
>
> "Went to the Duke's house, the first play I have been at these six months, according to my last vowe, and here saw the so much cried-up play of *Henry the Eighth,* which, though I went with resolution to like it, is so simple a thing, made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done."
>
> "To the Duke's house, and saw *Macbeth,* which though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable."

"To the King's house, and there saw *The Tameing of a Shrew,* which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play."

"To the King's playhouse, to see an old play of Shirly's, called *Hide Park;* the first day acted."

Pepys's epitaph was finely and justly written by Evelyn:

"This day died Mr. Sam Pepys, a very worthy, industrious, and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in which he had passed thro' all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts and Secretary of the Admiralty, all which he performed with great integrity. When K. James II went out of England he laid down his office, and would serve no more, but withdrawing himselfe from all public affaires, he liv'd at Clapham with his partner Mr. Hewer, formerly his clerk, in a very noble and sweet place, where he enjoyed the fruits of his labours in greate prosperity. He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skill'd in music, a very great cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation."

§ 2

EVELYN'S DIARY

John Evelyn was a man of very different calibre. He was born in 1620 and lived till 1706. He was a member of a well-to-do family whose seat was in Dorking. Naturally a Royalist, he was prevented by a series of extraordinarily happy accidents from fighting with the Cavaliers, and he spent three of the troubled years of the Puritan Revolution in making a grand tour of Europe, the events of which are recorded in the first part of the Diary.

Returning to England, he went to live at Sayes Court in Deptford, spending most of the rest of his life "minding his

books and his garden." Although Evelyn lived in the seventeenth century, he had all the eighteenth century love of artificiality. He disliked the forest of Fontainebleau because of its "hideous rocks." The Alps did not move him, but a "trim garden" filled him with extraordinary delight. He loved tortoises and apiaries and labyrinths—all the absolute artificiality which Horace Walpole also loved in his time. Horace Walpole, by the way, had a natural and intense admiration for Evelyn.

Evelyn lived an uneventful, useful, and dignified life, and the value of his Diary is that, just as Pepys tells us how the average uncultured seventeenth-century citizens lived, so Evelyn tells us how the God-fearing country gentleman lived, what he thought, and what were his prejudices and limitations. Evelyn occasionally went to Court, and for a while held public office; but he was equally out of sympathy with the raffishness of Charles II and the bigotry of his brother James.

We give an extract from the diary which describes the Great Fire of London.

> I went this morning on foote from White-hall as far as London Bridge, thro' the late Fleete Street, Ludgate Hill, by St. Paules, Cheapside, Exchange, Bishopsgate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorefields, thence thro' Cornehill, &c. with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was. The ground under my feete so hot, that it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the mean time his Majesty got to the Tower by water, to demolish the houses about the graff, which being built intirely about it, had they taken fire and attack'd the White Tower where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten downe and destroyed all the bridge, but sunke and torne the vessells in the river, and render'd the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the countrey.
>
> At my returne I was infinitely concern'd to find that

goodly Church St. Paules now a sad ruine, and that beautifull portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repair'd by the late King), now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing remaining intire but the inscription in the architrave, shewing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defac'd. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heate had in a manner calcin'd, so that all the ornaments, columnes, freezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland stone flew off, even to the very roofe, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no lesse than 6 akers by measure) was totally mealted; the ruines of the vaulted roofe falling broke into St. Faith's, which being fill'd with the magazines of bookes belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consum'd, burning for a weeke following.

It is observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouch'd, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remain'd intire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most antient pieces of early piety in the Christian world, besides neere 100 more. The lead, yron worke, bells, plate, &c. mealted; the exquisitely wrought Mercers Chapell, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabriq of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies Halls, splendid buildings, arches, enteries, all in dust; the fountaines dried up and ruin'd, whilst the very waters remain'd boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerely warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clowds of smoke, so that in five or six miles traversing about, I did not see one loade of timber unconsum'd, nor many stones but what were calcin'd white as snow. The people who now walk'd about the ruines appear'd like men in some dismal desart, or rather in some greate Citty laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor creatures bodies, beds, and other conbustible goods . . . Nor was I yet able to passe through any of the narrower streetes, but kept the widest; the ground and aire, smoake and fiery

vapour, continu'd so intense that my haire was almost sing'd, and my feete unsufferably surbated. The bie lanes and narrower streetes were quite fill'd up with rubbish, nor could one have possibly knowne where he was, but by the ruines of some Church or Hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining. I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seene 200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispers'd and lying along by their heapes of what they could save from the fire, deploring their losse, and tho' ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one pennie for reliefe, which to me appear'd a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld.

§ 3

SAMUEL BUTLER

"Hudibras"

Samuel Butler's "Hudibras" is an "epic satire" on the extravagancies of the Puritans who were triumphant during the Commonwealth and became objects of popular dislike with the Restoration. Butler was born in Worcestershire in 1612. He took no personal part in the Civil War and was one of the many literary men of the time who were content to be spectators of the struggle between Parliament and King. Samuel Butler has been described by Andrew Lang as "a retired, bookish, sardonic humorist."

Pepys tells us that "Hudibras" was the most popular book of the day. Despite its popularity its author apparently received little financial benefit from it and, despite his devotion to the Royalist party, he received nothing from the King. Dryden said very bitterly: "It is enough for our age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler."

Butler was influenced by Cervantes; in fact, *Hudibras* is a burlesque of *Don Quixote*. Hudibras is the Presbyterian Don Quixote; Ralph, his squire, is an Independent Sancho

Panza. The extravagancies of the Puritans are gibbeted with humour and learning. Referring to the Civil War and to the Puritans' love for change, Butler wrote:

> Call fire and sword and desolation
> A godly thorough Reformation,
> Which always must be carried on,
> And still be doing, never done,
> As if Religion were intended
> For nothing else than to be mended. . . .

Perhaps the best-known of Butler's lines are those in which he refers to the people who

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to:
> Still so perverse and opposite
> As if they worshipped God for spite.

§ 4

JOHN DRYDEN

A Great Poet

Our knowledge of John Dryden, a great poet, who could also write a fine, flexible kind of prose, is strangely shadowy. He came of a family of some distinction in Northamptonshire, was born in 1631, and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity, Cambridge, taking his degree in 1654. For the rest we must depend for our portrait of the man-in-himself on a few anecdotes, some of them heard at third or fourth hand. Our first introduction to Dryden as a living human being comes from the lively Pepys. On February 3, 1664, Pepys tells us that he stopped at Will's and met there "Dryden, the poet I knew at Cambridge," and all the wits of the town. The company pleased the diarist, and he thinks "it will be good coming hither." The picture of "glorious John" at Will's, which Scott has made famous, is probably true to fact, and, as Professor Saintsbury

says, there is no harm in thinking of Dryden in the great coffee-house, with his chair in the balcony in summer, by the fire in winter, passing criticisms and paying good-natured compliments on matters literary. We know also that he was fond of fishing, took a deal of snuff, did not drink much till led to do so by Addison, and had a very vulgar stomach, preferring a chine of bacon even to marrow puddings.

Dryden was the most various poet of his age. In "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) we have the first polished satire in the language. Hitherto satire had been shrewd rough-and-ready quarter-staff play (as in Butler's "Hudibras") or rugged versification (as in much of Marvell's and Donne's) through which the rhymes ring like breastplates smitten with a broad-sword. Here is the famous character of Zimri (George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham) from this truly wonderful poem:

> A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
> Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long;
> But in the course of our revolving moon
> Was chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon;
> Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
> Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
> Blest madman, who could every hour employ
> With something new to wish or to enjoy!
> Railing and praising were his usual themes,
> And both, to show his judgment, in extremes;
> So over violent or over civil
> But every man with him was God or Devil.
> In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
> Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
> Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
> He had his jest, and they had his estate.

The wealth of irony, the sting in each couplet, the Shavian superciliousness of the banter—these were new things in English verse, and even Pope never surpassed Dryden's technique of

obloquy. "MacFlecknoe" (1682) followed in the same mode, and the immortal flagellation of the dull and industrious Shadwell is as well known as the character of Buckingham. Flecknoe, absolute in all the realms of nonsense, settles which of his many sons shall succeed:

> Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
> Mature in dullness from his tender years;
> Shadwell, alone, of all my sons, is he
> Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
> The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Afterwards, in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel" he assails Og (Shadwell) once again with Doeg (Settle):

> Who by my muse to all succeeding times
> Shall live, in spite of their own doggerel rhymes.

"Religio Laici," which Scott regarded as one of the most admirable poems in the language, is a lively argument in verse on the credibility of the Christian faith and on the merits of the Church of England as a midway course, avoiding extremes, which had become an immortal institution because "common quiet is mankind's concern."

What, then, is chiefly left in Dryden for a reader of today? His many plays are now rarely read, but they are often magnificent and "All For Love" bears comparison with Shakespeare's version of Antony's love for Cleopatra. His critical essays, too profound for the general reader even in his own day, are still studied with profit by serious artists. And his "Fables," which are long stories told in verse, are not excelled, as narratives, in any language. The reader who takes up "Cymon and Iphigenia," or "Palamon and Arcite," is not likely to lay down the book until he has reached the end. They are little epics, and, in their finest passages, come nearer to the style of Homer

than any other poems. His noble Odes will also be remembered, of which he thought "Alexander's Feast" the best, and indeed his most perfect poem. But the "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is quite as fine, and the well-known lines upon the Birth of Music were never equalled by him in their sweet and noble beauty:

When Jubal struck the chorded shell
  His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
  To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell
Which spoke so sweetly and so well.

Johnson, on the other hand, pronounced the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew" the noblest in the English tongue, and the following magnificent passage from it, as glorious a piece of stately word-music as is to be discovered in the long interval between Milton and Wordsworth, aptly closes this account of one of the greatest of English poets:

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,
  Made in the last promotion of the blessed;
Whose palms, new plucked from Paradise,
In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
  Rich with immortal green above the rest:
Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star,
Thou rollest above us, in thy wandering race,
  Or, in procession fixed and regular
  Movest with the heaven's majestic pace;
  Or, called to more superior bliss,
Thou treadest with seraphims the vast abyss:
Whatever happy region is thy place,
Cease thy celestial song a little space;
Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,
  Since Heaven's eternal year is thine.
Hear, then, a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,
    In no ignoble verse;

But such as thy own voice did practise here,
When thy first fruits of Poesy were given,
To make thyself a welcome inmate there;
While yet a young probationer,
And candidate of heaven.

§ 5

THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

Congreve and Wycherley

The theatre, which had been banned during the Puritan rule in England, came back to its own with the Restoration of Charles II. Later seventeenth-century opinion held Shakespeare in small esteem, and the older plays of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley soon gave way to a new order of drama that was the creation of the spirit of the new times. While Charles II was reigning in England, Molière was writing in France, and it was natural and inevitable that the Restoration dramatists should have been influenced by the great French master of comedy. What they did not borrow from France was directly inspired by the atmosphere of the Court of Charles II. Charles Lamb insisted that the old comedy "has no reference whatever to the world that is." That is happily true: but it had a very considerable reference to the world that existed when the second Charles frivolled at Whitehall. William Congreve was the most considerable of the Restoration dramatists. Swinburne declared that his *The Way of the World* is "the unequalled and unapproached masterpiece of English comedy: the one play in our language which may fairly claim a place beside, or but just beneath, the mightiest work of Molière." Voltaire, who had heard of his genius, called on him during his stay in England, and Congreve expressed a wish not to be regarded as a dramatist but as a gentleman; whereupon the sardonic French philosopher apologised for his call. William Wycherley was thirty years older than Congreve. He was

brought up in Paris, and his first play, *Love in a Wood,* was produced in 1672. His fame as a dramatist mainly rests on his two comedies *The Country Wife* and *A Plain Dealer,* both coarse enough to justify Macaulay's nausea, but both excellent in their characterisation and their humour.

Other dramatists of the period of less importance are John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace, George Etheridge, Otway, and Lee, who collaborated with Dryden in imitations of Corneille. Dryden himself is a Restoration dramatist, but he was far more than a dramatist, as we have seen.

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XVI

FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

§ 1

Pascal

PASCAL, one of the French writers of genius of the first half of the seventeenth century, was a very definite Puritan. He was born in 1623, and was a mathematician as well as a theologian and a great writer. In his *Lettres Provinciales* and his *Pensées,* Pascal deals with the great problems of life, the miserable insufficiency of all that is human and the consuming glory of God. No writer ever emphasised more fiercely the pitiful impotence of man as compared with the infinite, no religious fanatic ever more vehemently admonished humiliation, no philosopher was ever more awestruck by the greatness of the universe in which man is so small a thing. Looking to the heavens Pascal exclaimed: "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces fills me with fear."

Many of his "Thoughts," brief, striking, and profound, are as familiar as household words in almost every land. Here are a few typical examples:

> Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed.
>
> The heart has reasons of its own, of which Reason never dreams.
>
> If the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter the whole history of the earth would have been changed.

The French Academy

The idea of ensuring the correctness of the French language, of establishing a recognised standard of literary taste, and of creating a literary authority, owed much to Cardinal Richelieu, who set up the French Academy in 1629. The Cardinal desired order and authority in literature as in everything else. While the French Academy has given literature a place in national life that it has never had in England, it has always made a conservative resistance to every new literary development, and some of the greatest of French writers, including Molière and Flaubert, have never been elected to a seat among the "Immortals." One of the earliest acts of the Academy was to belittle the first work of genius to be produced in France in the seventeenth century—Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*. But no academy or any other committee of literary men could be expected to discover novelties—that achievement is for the intuition of individuals. The French Academy has nobly served its end by giving official expression to the tradition of literary good taste in France—a tradition which unfortunately has not maintained itself so uniformly in any other national literature except that of the Greeks.

Pierre Corneille

Pierre Corneille was born at Rouen in 1606, and his first play was produced in 1636. Corneille lived until 1684, and his later plays belong to the era of Louis XIV. He stands in literary history as the forerunner of the great century of French literature rather than as one of its actual figures. Corneille was by nature a romantic; he loved words as much as Rabelais loved them. He was as fond of rhetoric as Marlowe, and of tempestuous melodrama as Webster or any other of the Elizabethans.

Corneille was a very unequal writer. Molière once said: "My friend Corneille has a familiar spirit that inspires him to write the finest verses in the world. Sometimes the familiar spirit

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME"

A Scene from Molière's well-known Comedy.

Nicole, Jourdain's servant, broom in hand, makes a lunge at her master, who, clumsily attempting to parry it, receives a palpable hit.

leaves him to look after himself, and then he writes very badly." His genius was justly recognised in his own time; but later critics, including Voltaire, rated him as a writer of small importance. At his best, Corneille expresses the gallant and eloquent side of the French genius, the lovable disposition to make a sacrifice with a fine gesture. *Cyrano de Bergerac* will help the modern foreign reader to approach Corneille's mood. Voltaire was another kind of Frenchman.

Descartes

The great French philosopher, René Descartes, published his *Discours de la Méthode* within a few months of the appearance of *Le Cid*. It is outside the scope of this OUTLINE to attempt any summary of the mathematical and metaphysical speculations with which the fame of Descartes is associated, but he has a considerable place in the history of French literature as a master of a clear and simple style. He was born in 1596 and died in Stockholm in 1650. His first book, a treatise on fencing, was written when he was sixteen, and from then to the end of his life he was an industrious and voluminous writer.

§ 2

MOLIÈRE

Molière's Life

Molière was the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who was born in Paris in 1622, his father being a Court upholsterer. Molière was educated by the Jesuits, translated Lucretius, read Aristotle, and was sufficiently educated to defend Descartes. Like many another young man, Molière might have been a successful upholsterer and have succeeded his father as a Court tradesman. But he preferred to be an actor. When

he was twenty he organised a company of players, hired a Paris tennis-court, and fitted it up with a stage for dramatic performances. The time, however, was ill-fitted for theatrical success. Paris was in a constant state of political ferment; the streets were none too safe, and the citizens were in no mood for the play. Molière and his comrades acted in various tennis-courts, but everywhere with the same lack of success. In 1645, indeed, he was imprisoned for a time for not paying for the candles used in the theatre.

After four years' persistent failure in Paris, Molière determined to seek his fortune in the provinces; and for the next ten years he lived the life of a strolling-player, in those days one of hardship and adventure—very much, indeed, the same as the life led by nineteenth-century English showmen as described by Dickens in *The Old Curiosity Shop.* When the temporary stage had been erected in a tennis-court or barn, it was hung round with tapestries, and the actors made their entrances and exits by struggling through heavy curtains. The hall was generally lighted by a chandelier holding four candles, and suspended from the ceiling; and it was customary every now and again to let down the chandelier with a rope and pulley that some kindly soul in the audience might snuff the candles with his fingers.

Molière was a tall, amiable, kind-hearted man, generous, honest, and good-humoured. "His nose was thick, his mouth large with thick lips, his complexion brown, his eyebrows black and strongly marked, and it was his way of moving them that gave him his comic expression on the stage." All his contemporaries agreed in regarding him as a great comic actor as well as a dramatist of genius. Molière's masterpieces are *Les Précieuses Ridicules, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Tartuffe, Le Misanthrope,* and *Le Malade Imaginaire,* all of which hold the stage to-day as securely as the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare himself.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

SCENE FROM "LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME," BY W. P. FRITH, R.A.

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is perhaps the best known of Molière's comedies. It was often acted on the modern stage by the great French actor Coquelin.

Photo: Wallace Collection.

"THE LION IN LOVE," BY CAMILLE ROQUEPLAN

Wallace Collection, London.

Subject taken from the fables of La Fontaine, iv., 1.

His Qualities as a Writer

What are the qualities of a writer to whom critical opinion gives so high a praise? His great achievement was the creation of French comedy. He was a realist interested in the life of the people of his own time. He was as impressed as Chaucer and as Shakespeare with the humour and the drama of ordinary everyday life. Thus, in the *Précieuses Ridicules* he laughs at a set of women with literary affectations, a pose of France in 1650 as it has been a pose in England and America in later times; in *Tartuffe* he laughs rather bitterly at hypocrisy, and in the *Malade Imaginaire* he gibes at doctors. In the *Misanthrope,* perhaps the greatest of all his plays, he has, in the character of the hero, Alceste, chosen himself for a hero—a sensitive, lonely, disillusioned man, standing in a little dark lonely corner, pitted against a cold, superficial, unsympathetic world.

The incidents in Molière's plays are few and are carefully chosen, and he is concerned all the time with the development of character. Every incident and every situation, which would not serve to make his characters clearer to the audience, is rejected. Nor is he concerned with more than the outstanding characteristics of each person he puts on the stage. He paints in broad outline, and not in infinite detail. For example, Tartuffe is a hypocrite, who loves women and loves power. That is all that Molière tells us about him; that is all we need to know about him for the purpose of his play.

Like all great humorists, Molière is tolerant. He is never angry, even with his villains, for they too are human, and are as they are. He does not defend them or apologise for them, but he describes with accuracy and without passion, recognising that all human beings have a certain dignity whatever their shortcomings.

"Bourgeois Gentilhomme"

Perhaps the best known of Molière's comedies is the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme.* Molière himself was the original Jourdain,

a part associated with the fame of the great modern French actor Coquelin. Jourdain is a rich shopkeeper with an itch to get into society. In order that he may acquire a proper manner and an appropriate vocabulary, he engages a music master, a dancing master, a fencing master, and a teacher of philosophy, from the latter of whom he learns that "there is nothing by which we can express ourselves except prose or verse." Jourdain is astounded. " 'Pon my word," he says, "I have been speaking prose these forty years without being aware of it."

The music master, the dancing master, and the fencing master quarrel, and these professors together with Jourdain's new tailor make him a ridiculous figure of fun. But though Madame Jourdain may laugh at him, his aristocratic friend, Comte Dorante, approves of his escapades—and borrows his money. So completely turned is Jourdain's head that he refuses to allow his daughter to marry a young man of his own class until the suitor dresses up in oriental garments and professes that he is the son of the Grand Turk. The *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is a farce with the thinnest of plots, but its stagecraft is deft, its characterisation admirably humorous, and its dialogue delightfully witty.

Molière's career is more remarkable when it is remembered that all through his life he was not only a busy actor-manager, but that he was also continually exposed to the intrigues of his enemies—jealous rivals, and indignant churchmen, who, for reasons which are hard for us to understand, persistently denounced him as the enemy of God. The enmity of the Church continued even after his death. An eyewitness of Molière's funeral says:

> There was no procession, except three ecclesiastics; four priests bore the body in a wooden bier covered with a pall, six children in blue carried candles in silver holders, and there were lackeys with burning torches of wax. The body . . . was taken to St. Joseph's churchyard, and

buried at the foot of the cross. There was a great crowd, and some twelve hundred livres were distributed among the poor. The archbishop had given orders that Molière should be interred without any ceremony, and had even forbidden the clergy of the diocese to do any service for him.

From the first time that he acted before him to his death, Louis XIV extended constant favour and patronage to Molière, and even when the days of the king's worldliness had come to an end, and, under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, Versailles had acquired the air of a conventicle, the great dramatist retained the royal favour. But even this had its drawbacks, because it meant an enormous expenditure of time in writing masques and arranging entertainments.

As a writer Molière's influence may be to some extent estimated by the manner in which he has affected the language of his country. Every day English speech is interlarded with quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens, and no writer has given as many sentences and phrases to colloquial French as Molière. At least one of them, "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?" has almost become English.

Mr. Lytton Strachey says: "In the literature of France Molière occupies the same kind of position as Cervantes in that of Spain, Dante in that of Italy, and Shakespeare in that of England." And Andrew Lang declared: "In the literature of France his is the greatest name and in the literature of modern drama the greatest after that of Shakespeare." And the impartial student of literature must observe that modern drama is modelled on Molière's theatre rather than on Shakespeare's.

§ 3

JEAN RACINE

A Supreme French Writer

Racine has always appeared to English readers a dull writer, but in France not only are his plays still acted but he is

regarded by most Frenchmen as the supreme French writer. This is due, apart from the sheer beauty of his verse, to the complete and unrivalled success with which he achieved the French ideal of compression of incident, unity of time, and the avoidance of everything that was irrelevant to the theme of his play. It is due also to his insight into human psychology, into that most private world of experience in which the dramas of the soul take place. In this field he perhaps has had no rival since the Great Tragedians.

Jean Racine was born in 1639. His family were Jansenists—the French Puritans—and he was educated at the famous convent of Port-Royal. His early devotion to literature was naturally resented by his devout relations. In one of his letters he complains that a sonnet he wrote on Mazarin had brought him excommunication on excommunication. His first play, *La Thébaïde,* was produced by Molière's company in 1664, and it is possible that Molière himself acted in it. Molière also produced Racine's second play, *Alexandre le Grand.* A fortnight afterwards the dramatist took his play to a rival company, apparently having quarrelled with Molière. For ten years Racine continued writing play after play. His masterpieces are: *Andromaque, Phèdre,* and *Athalie.*

In 1673 he was elected to the French Academy. *Phèdre* was produced in 1677, and although Racine lived for another twenty years, in this play his writing practically came to an end. He repented of the loose life he had led, married, and settled down to a quiet, domestic life, living on a pension granted to him by Louis XIV. He died on April 12, 1699.

Phèdre is the best known of Racine's plays. Every French actress of talent still desires to appear at least once as Phèdre, just as every English actor of talent persists in playing *Hamlet.* It is a tragedy founded on the Greek, with many variations; a tremendous drama of horror, mystery, and jealousy, conveying something of the Greek dogma that man is helpless in the hands

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MOLIÈRE

The greatest of all French dramatists and the most popular of all French writers.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"LA MALADE IMAGINAIRE," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A.

South Kensington Museum.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

JEAN RACINE

Racine was a contemporary of Molière. His tragedies are the models of French classic drama.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

J. DE LA FONTAINE, BY DE TROY

Bibliothèque de Genève.

The famous French writer of fables, who lived in the reign of Louis XIV.

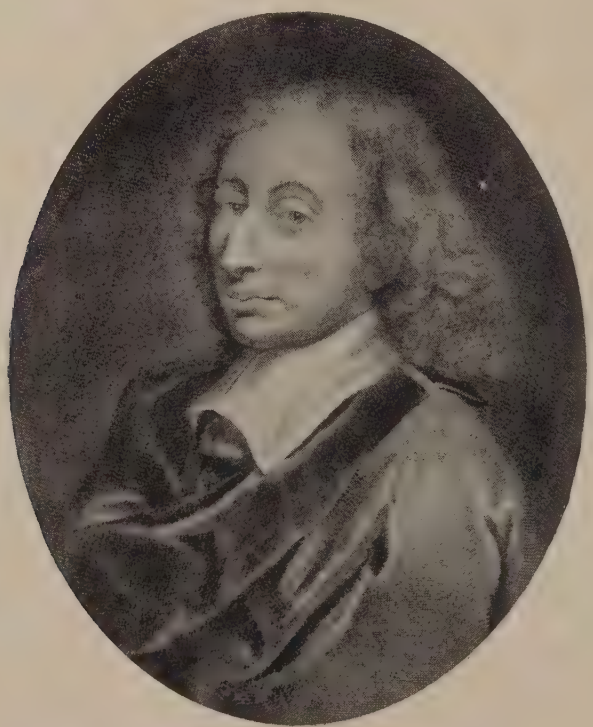

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

BLAISE PASCAL

The French Puritan philosopher.

of Fate. His earlier play, *Andromaque,* illustrates Racine's power to contrive dramatic effects with the smallest number of characters and incidents. There are only four characters in the play, two men and two women. Mr. Lytton Strachey has very deftly summarised the story:

> Andromaque, the still youthful widow of Hector, cares for only two things in the world with passionate devotion, her young son Astyanax and the memory of her husband. Both are the captives of Pyrrhus, the conqueror of Troy, a straightforward, chivalrous, but somewhat barbarous prince, who, though he is affianced to Hermione, is desperately in love with Andromaque. Hermione is a splendid tigress, consumed by her desire for Pyrrhus; and Oreste is a melancholy, almost morbid man, whose passion for Hermione is the dominating principle of his life. These are the ingredients of the tragedy, ready to explode like gunpowder with the slightest spark. The spark is lighted when Pyrrhus declares to Andromaque that if she will not marry him he will execute her son.
>
> Andromaque consents, but decides secretly to kill herself immediately after the marriage, and thus ensure both the safety of Astyanax and the honour of Hector's wife. Hermione, in a fury of jealousy, declares that she will fly with Oreste, on one condition—that he kills Pyrrhus. Oreste, putting aside all considerations of honour and friendship, consents; he kills Pyrrhus, and then returns to his mistress to claim his reward.
>
> There follows one of the most violent scenes that Racine ever wrote—in which Hermione, in an anger of remorse and horror, turns upon her wretched lover and denounces his crime. Forgetful of her own instigation, she demands who it was that suggested to him the horrible deed —"Qui te l'a dit?" she shrieks: one of those astounding phrases which, once heard, can never be forgotten. She rushes out to commit suicide, and the play ends with Oreste upon the stage.

In character Racine was the antithesis of Molière. He was jealous, arrogant, and irritable, with a bitter tongue, and the unfortunate habit of preferring a biting epigram to a friend. Thanks to the intrigue of one of the ladies at Court, *Phèdre* was a comparative failure, and this was the reason why Racine abandoned playwriting at the height of his power. He lacked the humour necessary to accept criticism with amusement.

§ 4

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE AND CHARLES PERRAULT

Jean de La Fontaine was born in 1621 at Château Thierry in Champagne. His father was a well-to-do deputy ranger, and Jean was his eldest child. He was educated at the college of his native town, and thought of taking Holy Orders; but before it was too late, found that he had mistaken his vocation. He then studied Law, until, in 1647, his father resigned his rangership in his son's favour, and arranged also a profitable marriage for him, with a young girl of sixteen, who brought him a dowry of 20,000 livres. Spiritually the marriage was not a success. We gather that Madame de la Fontaine read too many novels and neglected her housework, and after ten years they were separated.

La Fontaine was over thirty years of age before he began to write, and then he did not at once discover himself as a fabulist, but after the fashion of the period, wrote epigrams and ballads, and sought for patrons to whom he could flatteringly dedicate his poems, receiving in return worldly protection and financial benefits.

The fables of La Fontaine are, first of all, striking for their easy grace. He was poet and philosopher, as well as fabulist. La Fontaine's animals are never real animals. Unlike Fabre, he has no secrets to tell us of the inner life of the dumb creation. But he has a genius for describing the essential

exteriors of each animal, and, as has been well said, La Fontaine's animals are real animals with human minds.

Something of the charm of La Fontaine's writing may be gathered from the following translation of one of the fables:

THE JAY IN THE FEATHERS OF THE PEACOCK

A peacock moulted: soon a jay was seen
Bedeck'd with Argus tail of gold and green.
High strutting, with elated crest,
As much a peacock as the rest.
His trick was recognised and bruited,
His person jeer'd at, hiss'd, and hooted.
The peacock gentry flocked together,
And pluck'd the fool of every feather.
Nay more, when back he sneak'd to join his race,
They shut their portals in his face.

There is another sort of jay,
The number of its legs the same,
Which makes of borrowed plumes display,
And plagiary is its name.
But hush! the tribe I'll not offend;
'Tis not my work their ways to mend.

§ 5

Perrault's Fairy Tales

If La Fontaine developed the bald fable into a little human story, instead of merely an anecdote of beasts, his contemporary Charles Perrault gave it yet another lift into popularity by his introduction of the fairy element. Perrault realised that there are some human wishes so far beyond realisation that only magic can bring them about.

It has been said that there are only half-a-dozen plots in the whole realm of fiction; at least one of them is the story of the ragged girl who sits in the chimney-corner, and wishes she could go to the ball and dance with the Prince. And it was Perrault

who first created Cinderella. These are the titles of his familiar stories, which are legendary folk-tales, collected by him and retold in his own vivid and charming style: *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Little Red Riding-hood*); *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty*); *La Barbe-Bleue* (*Bluebeard*); *Le Maistre Chat, ou Le Chat Botté* (*Puss in Boots*); *Les Fées* (*The Fairy*); *Ceudrion, ou La Petite Pantoufle de Vair* (*Cinderella*); *Riquet à la Houppe* (*Riquet of the Tuft*); *Le Petit Poucet* (*Hop-o'-my-Thumb*); and *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*).

These, as everybody knows, have become *the* fairy-tales of the world. It is difficult to realise that they were definitely the leisure products of a seventeenth-century French nobleman, who rated them far below his more ponderous publications, which have long ago been forgotten.

§ 6

La Rochefoucauld's "Maximes"

The later writers of the Louis XIV era included Boileau, who did much to create a French classic tradition; Madame de Sévigné, author of a series of letters that reveal the age of Louis XIV, something in the same way as such a book as Evelyn's Diary reveals the time of Charles II; and La Bruyère, moralist and pessimist, who anticipated the social criticism of the eighteenth century and who has left us an ironic picture of the celebration of Mass at Versailles, in which the courtiers turned their faces to the King and their backs to God.

La Rochefoucauld, author of the famous book of *Maximes,* was an aristocrat. In this respect he differed from every other distinguished writer of the age of Louis XIV. Cold, disillusioned, as worldly in his philosophy as Chesterfield, the following extracts from the *Maximes* are characteristic of the man, and characteristic of the age, the splendour, and glory, which were the preparation of the horrors of the Revolution.

The simplest man with passion is more persuasive than the most eloquent without it.

We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others.

Philosophy triumphs easily over past and over future evils, but present evils triumph easily over philosophy.

Old men are fond of giving good advice, to console themselves for being no longer in a position to give bad examples.

Hypocrisy is the homage which vice renders to virtue.

Gratitude is like the good faith of traders, it maintains commerce; and we often pay, not because it is just to discharge our debts, but that we may more readily find people to trust.

We should often be ashamed of our best actions, if the world were witness to the motives which produce them.

None but the contemptible are apprehensive of contempt.

We are often more agreeable through our faults than through our good qualities.

Fortune breaks us of many faults which reason cannot.

None are either so happy or so unhappy as they imagine.

The head is always the dupe of the heart.

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XVII

POPE, ADDISON, STEELE, SWIFT

POPE, ADDISON, STEELE, SWIFT

§ 1

ALEXANDER POPE

Pope's Character

ALEXANDER POPE, born in 1688, was the greatest poet of his age and one of the greatest versifiers of all ages. "Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure," wrote one of his innumerable enemies, but there seems no reason to doubt that his father was a well-to-do linen-draper. His character was as malformed as his puny body, and when contemplating his detestable pettiness, it is well to act on the charitable advice of Mr. Augustine Birrell and "remember that, during his whole maturity, he could neither dress nor undress himself, go to bed or get up without help, and that on rising he had to be invested with a stiff canvas bodice and tightly laced, and have put on him a fur doublet and numerous stockings to keep off the cold and fill out his shrunken form." His life was a long disease; his lifelong bitterness must be charitably excused. It was a "noble rage" for learning, an insatiable curiosity for exploring human nature which wrecked a feeble health that eighteenth-century medicine could hardly have improved. He was extraordinarily sensitive; he loathed every kind of sport in which some living creature was pursued. His wit was his only weapon and he used it ruthlessly—often treacherously, and never with the bluff, open straightforwardness which causes some of Dryden's strokes to sound like a slap. His mind was a clearing-

house for all the scandalous gossip, and he was a specialist in the ignoble art of quarrelling. He had no chivalry in his crippled soul—he satirised Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom he made violent love, in the most brutal lines ever written by man against woman. He hated his literary rivals, great or small; he includes Bentley and Defoe among the dunces of his "Dunciad," which too often rises to a shriek. And, as a punishment, the sarcasm of the merest scribbler caused him to writhe in anguish. Indeed, the venomous poet's character and curses at times overtax our charity.

Pope had a double power. He could crystallise the plain man's thoughts into memorable verse and he could express thoughts of the subtlest ingenuity. Next to Shakespeare, he is the most often quoted (and misquoted) of English poets. He is easily the most elegant versifier of his age, and there is no question of his right to be regarded as a true poet.

Pope, living his sheltered life and not having to struggle for a livelihood, soon made his mark. His "Pastorals" (published 1709) were actually preferred by one critic to Virgil's "Eclogues"! They prove his zeal for "correctness" and something of the genius for taking infinite pains. In 1711 he put forth his "Essay on Criticism" (1709), which, though unequal, is a wonderful achievement for a youth of twenty-one. Here is a famous passage:

> A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
> And drinking largely sobers us again.

"Rape of the Lock"

The "Rape of the Lock," complete with its "machinery" of sylphs and gnomes, appeared in 1714, and was acclaimed as a masterpiece of wit. It is in form perfect of its kind, with the brilliancy of a piece of Dresden china and something, it may be,

of its hardness. Here is the description of the lock of hair, the theft of which was the cause of such disaster:

> This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
> Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind,
> In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
> With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.
> Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
> And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
> With hairy springes we the birds betray,
> Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
> Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
> And beauty draws us with a single hair.

His next great work was his translations of Homer's Poems, which have rapidity and nobleness, two at any rate of the qualities required of so daring an adventurer. The "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "Eloisa to Abelard" are to be read as illustrations of this serious manner. If the latter falls short of the piercing passion of the immortal love-story, there is yet a deep understanding of the human heart in these lines:

> Assist me, heav'n! but whence arose that pray'r?
> Sprung it from piety or from despair?
> Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,
> Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.
> I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
> I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;
> I view my crime, but kindle at the view,
> Repent old pleasures, and solicit new;
> Now turn'd to heav'n, I weep my past offence,
> Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.
> Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
> 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!

"The Dunciad"

In "The Dunciad" (first complete edition, 1729)—written at his leisure despite Swift's warning: "Take care that the bad

poets do not outwit you," and the fact that the dullards satirised were dying off one by one out of sheer stupid perversity—we have the most elaborate, if not the most effective, satire in the language. The freshness and unageing force of the satire reside in its universal appeal, for it attacks that inexpugnable power of stupidity, enthroned in every age, against which the gods themselves strive in vain. The best passage is the last of all, in which the extinction of all intelligence, all the arts and sciences, is fantastically foretold—a piece of very noble verse—

> In vain, in vain—the all-composing hour
> Resistless falls: the Muse obeys the power.
> She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
> Of night primæval and of Chaos old!
> Before her, fancy's gilded clouds decay,
> And all its varying rainbows die away.
> Wit shoots in vain its monetary fires.
> The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
> As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
> The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
> As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,
> Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
> Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
> Art after art goes out, and all is night.
> See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
> Mountains of casuistry heap'd o'er her head.
> Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
> Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
> Physic of metaphysic begs defence,
> And metaphysic calls for aid on sense!
> See mystery to mathematics fly!
> In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
> Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares morality expires.
> Nor public claim, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restor'd;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word;
> Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
> And universal darkness buries all.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"THE REJECTED POET. LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND POPE," BY W. P. FRITH, R.A.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Pope made love to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and afterwards lampooned her.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY GOING TO CHURCH," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A.

Sir Roger de Coverley was a character invented by Steele and Addison in the *Spectator*.

But finer, perhaps, than anything in "The Dunciad" is the passage in the *Satires* which holds up to ridicule Lord Hervey under the name of "Sporus":

> Let Sporus tremble—What? that thing of silk,
> Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?
> Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
> Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
> Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
> This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
> Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
> The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
> Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
> Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord
> Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest,
> A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
> Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust;
> Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

"Essay on Man"

To-day, however, the "Essay on Man" is the most read of all Pope's poems. It gave him a European reputation, winning the warm admiration of Voltaire and others who had the ear of the civilised world. It is not, as Pope believed, a real contribution to philosophy. Modern criticism, in appraising its ethical value, steers a midway course between the extravagant compliment of Dugald Stewart, who called it "the noblest specimen of philosophical poetry which our language affords," and the extravagant condemnation of De Quincey, who dismissed it as "the realisation of anarchy." It contains constantly quoted lines such as:

> An honest man's the noblest work of God,

which set forth in the fewest and most emphatic words possible thoughts which are always in men's minds. The crowd-compelling power of such ever-popular poems consists in the fact that they say in memorable phrases, with a simple, striking

imagery, what the average man thinks—or thinks he thinks—about the great problems of human life, here and in the hereafter. Everybody can appreciate the familiar image in the following lines:

> God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul
> Must rise from Individual to the Whole.
> Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
> As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
> The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
> Another still, and still another spreads;
> Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
> His country next; and next all human race;
> Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
> Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;
> Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
> And Heav'n beholds its image in his breast.

None the less it is a part of the poet's many-sided art thus to refurbish a truism into the truth, and out of a platitude create a proverbial saying. Pope's "Moral Essays" are full of the lines that have attained almost the currency of proverbs. They teach us to search "the ruling passion," and to admire the proofs of potency even in the hour of death, as in such humorous instances as Narcissa's:

> "Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke"
> (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke).
> "No, let a charming chintz, and Brussels lace
> Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face:
> One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead—
> And—Betty—give this cheek a little red."

Sometimes Pope's faculty of proverb-making takes a loftier flight, as in the famous epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton:

> Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in night:
> God said, "*Let Newton be!*" And all was light.

But it is Pope's strength, and his weakness also, that he expressed the mind of the average man who judges his fellow-creatures from a practical standpoint, by their words and works, and not by their intentions, and those rare and thrilling intimations of better, braver things which are the stuff of the greatest poetry.

John Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera,* was the best beloved of Pope's circle of friends. Pope described him:

> Of manners gentle, of affection mild;
> In art a man, simplicity a child.

He wrote comedies and fables, but *The Beggar's Opera*—a foretaste of Gilbertian topsy-turvydom—made him famous, and when its sequel, *Polly,* was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, its publication made Gay comparatively well off. Gay was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his monument bears his own line:

> Life is a jest and all things show it:
> I thought so once and now I know it.

§ 2

ADDISON AND STEELE

The Rise of the Modern Essay

We come to the rise of the English Essay as we now understand this form of English literature. It may be noted that the early years of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries were all favourable to the periodical essay in this country. In the first of these three periods Addison and Steele socialised the essay, so to speak; they brought it into everyday life and made it familiar and delightful to the multitude. In the hands of imitators like Fielding, Johnson, Goldsmith, Shenstone, Bonnell Thornton, and others, the essay remained popular, though less distinguished, throughout the century of its rebirth. Early

in the nineteenth century it became more definitely a means of intimate self-expression in the hands of Lamb, and Hazlitt, and De Quincey; and its later prosperity as a literary form needs no indication. To-day its popularity seems steadily to increase. It is now a self-existing form of literary expression. But the essay of Addison and Steele was rather a new and elevated kind of journalism, designed to form and unite public opinion in an age when newspapers were few and had little or no moral influence.

The England of Queen Anne

The opportunity was there and these essayists took it. In the dawn of the eighteenth century English society lacked cohesion and tone. The events of the previous half-century had left many sullen divisions. Puritanism and the Established Church still watched each other in fear and suspicion. The Court had been vitiated by Charles II, and immorality had become nothing less than a fashionable cult with a stock of ideas and shibboleths which are reflected in the artificialities and indecencies of the Restoration comedies. The party system, which was to give power and direction to Parliament and to purify statesmanship, was only in formation. London and the country were separated by physical and spiritual gulfs which we can hardly realise. It was into such a world that Steele and Addison brought their urbane wisdom, their reconciling wit, and their gospel of decency, kindliness, and right reason.

Undoubtedly the inventive element in this new literature was Steele's. He it was who conceived the *Tatler*. His previous career may be briefly summarised. Born in Dublin in 1672, he had met Addison, a schoolfellow, at the Charterhouse. There were but two months between their ages. They met again at Oxford, but Steele left the university to go soldiering. As private, ensign, and captain, he learnt something of the prodigal habits which helped him to interpret human nature and its foibles in the *Tatler* with a touch sympathetic, yet half monitory. He

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

SCENE FROM "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA," BY HOGARTH

National Gallery, London.

Gay, who wrote *The Beggar's Opera*, was a contemporary of Pope, and the revival of his famous opera has served to demonstrate his Gilbertian humour.

TITLE-PAGE OF POPE'S "THE DUNCIAD," 1728

wrote his first book, *The Christian Hero,* while he was still an ensign, in order to correct his "propensity to unwarrantable pleasures." That was in 1701; but his friends in the Army, and the men about town, and in the end he himself, were not impressed by his moral and religious ideas in the book, and he went on to write plays.

His fourth play, *The Conscious Lovers,* fairly took the town, and Harley, the Whig Minister, bestowed on him the post of Gazetteer and Gentleman Usher at Court.

Addison's Career

Meanwhile Addison's training had been more cosmopolitan, more that of a travelled scholar and man of culture, than Steele's. After ten years at Magdalen College, Oxford, where his portrait still hangs in the hall, while his favourite walk is pointed out on the banks of Cherwell, he decided against taking orders, and his literary experience began, like Montaigne's, with the writing of Latin verse.

His first English verse soon followed, and he used it adroitly to gain the ear of Dryden, who asked him for a critical preface to "The Georgics" of Virgil—a high honour from a past master. Dryden spoke of him as "the most ingenious W. Addison of Oxford"; and with that recognition his future seemed assured. But politics counted for much in Addison's life, as well as in Steele's: Addison was a good Whig, and his Whig friends got for him a travelling pension of £300 a year, to enable him to go abroad, learn French and Italian, and qualify for a diplomatic career. This leads to his travels in France and Italy, his meeting with Boileau, his return via Germany and Holland to England in 1702. "The letter from Italy to Halifax," in rhymed couplets, and his poem "The Compaign," in the same measure, read to us now like fine literary exercises, compared with the prose of his essays. But "The Campaign" was the making of Addison. Godolphin, the Whig premier, had strong political

reasons for making the most of Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim in August, 1704. He sought out Addison, who was then, it is said, living obscurely in a garret at the top of three flights of stairs in the Haymarket. The poem is no longer read, but its famous simile of Marlborough and the angel will always be quoted:

> So when an angel at divine command,
> With rising tempests shakes a guilty land
> (Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed),
> Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;
> And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

The poem fulfilled all Godolphin's wishes, and Addison was rewarded with an Under-Secretaryship of State, the first of a number of offices of profit which he honourably if not too competently filled. He had no hand in the design or first publication of the *Tatler,* and, indeed, was in Ireland at the time as Secretary to the Earl of Wharton, Lord Lieutenant, but he soon recognised Steele's hand, and his proffered help as a contributor was wisely and warmly accepted.

"The Tatler"

The *Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709. Wishing to be anonymous Steele adopted the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, borrowed from Swift, who had taken it from a shop-door in Long Acre and used it as a cloak under which to attack John Partridge, a notorious advertising astrologer and almanac-maker. Although the *Tatler* underwent considerable change after Addison began to write for it, Steele launched it in the right way. He linked it to the coffee-houses, of which there were no fewer than three thousand in London. They were the centres of news gossip and discussion. He announced in his first number:

> All accounts of gallantry, pleasures, and entertainment shall be under article of White's Chocolate house;

> poetry under that of Will's Coffee-house; learning under the title of the Grecian; foreign and domestic news you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment.

White's Coffee-house, the parent of White's Club, and the St. James's Coffee-house were in St. James's Street; Will's, where Dryden in his winter chair by the fire or his summer seat on the balcony, had dictated the laws of criticism and taste in poetry to his worshippers, was in Russell Street; and the "Grecian," the oldest of all the coffee-houses, was in Devereux Court, Essex Street. In these places Steele collected news and topics; in places the *Tatler* was itself discussed. Its success was immediate. Steele made an appeal at the outset to women by declaring that his title was chosen in their honour. The paper appeared three times a week on the post days, which were Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The first four numbers were given away gratis, and then the price of one penny was charged. The motto adopted was Juvenal's "Quicquid agunt homines," etc., freely translated:

> Whate'er men do, or say, or think, or dream,
> Our motley paper seizes for its theme.

Some of Addison's most delightful essays appear in the *Tatler,* but Steele stamped its character on the work as a censor of manners and morals, a corrector of the public taste, and exponent of everyday London topics. His aim was, as he said, "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour."

"The Spectator"

All these elements in the *Tatler* combined to prepare the way for the more finished but not more vivid art of the *Spectator,*

with Sir Roger de Coverley, like a full-length portrait by Gainsborough, for the master of those humours and ceremonies.

Isaac Bickerstaff had unluckily meddled in politics in the earlier career of the *Tatler*, as we know by Swift and his "Letters to Stella"; and Steele lost his post as Gazetteer owing to that fact. This, too, helped to bring the journal to its rather sudden end; and it was probably on Addison's more prudent counsel that it was decided to begin a new organ entirely without politics.

On January 2, 1711, appeared the last *Tatler*. At the beginning of March following appeared the first of the *Spectator*.

The *Spectator* was at first a penny paper, issued daily; but in 1712, when the stamp duty killed off several papers, the price was raised to twopence. Steele and Addison's collaborative journal ran to 555 numbers; the later numbers, to 635, were an attempt to revive it without Steele, and an unsuccessful one. Addison's picturesque statement of his aims is worth quoting. In an early number he wrote: "It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools, colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."

> It is not strange [says Macaulay] that the success of the *Spectator* should have been such as no similar work has ever obtained. The number of copies daily distributed was at first three thousand. It subsequently increased, and had risen to near four thousand when the stamp tax was imposed. The *Spectator,* however, stood its ground, and though its circulation fell off, still yielded a large revenue both to the State and to the authors. For particular papers, the demand was immense; of some, it is said, twenty thousand copies were required. But this was not all. To have the *Spectator* served up every morning with the bohea and the rolls was a luxury for the few. The majority were content to wait till essays enough had appeared to form a

volume. Ten thousand copies of each volume were immediately taken off, and new editions were called for. It must be remembered, that the population of England was then hardly a third of what it now is (in 1845). There was doubtless more than one knight of the shire whose country seat did not contain ten books, receipt books and books on farriery included. In these circumstances, the sale of the *Spectator* must be considered as indicating a popularity quite as great as that of the most successful works of Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Dickens of our time.

By their genius, Steele and Addison made of the essay a perfectly responsive form of literature, in direct touch with life. In the "Sir Roger de Coverley" series they worked their richest vein of the human comedy; it is one of the charms of the essay, as they wrote it, that it is able to touch so many of the other literary forms without losing its own individual quality. And for their style, which is carried to a degree of colloquial perfection, it may be described as "a talking mode" of writing, almost as easy in apparent effect as speech itself.

"Tatler" and "Spectator" compared

To illustrate the two essayists' separate and joint faculty let us take an instance of the "Isaac Bickerstaff" papers in the *Tatler,* which deals with London coffee-house "talkers and story-tellers" and then a Sir Roger de Coverley essay. The *Tatler* essay is No. 264, dated as Bickerstaff's custom was "from my own Apartment, December 15" (1710):

> It was said of two ancient authors, who had very different beauties in their style, "that if you took a word from one of them, you only spoiled his eloquence; but if you took a word from the other, you spoiled his sense." I have often applied the first part of this criticism to several of these coffee-house speakers whom I have at present in my thoughts, though the character that is given to the last of

those authors is what I would recommend to the imitation of my loving countrymen. But it is not only public places of resort, but private clubs and conversations over a bottle, that are infested with this loquacious kind of animal, especially that species which I comprehend under the name of a story-teller. I would earnestly desire these gentlemen to consider, that no point of wit or mirth at the end of a story can atone for the half hour that has been lost before they come at it. I would likewise lay it home to their serious consideration, whether they think that every man in the company has not a right to speak as well as themselves? and whether they do not think they are invading another man's property, when they engross the time which should be divided equally among the company to their own private use?

This goes to illustrate the talking habit in the London coffee-houses, which is so nearly related to the colloquial art of the periodical essay.

As for Sir Roger de Coverley, he was a joint creation. Steele first struck out the portrait in an admirable pastiche; Addison went on and elaborated the knight's adventures and London humours. The whole is an inimitable personal study; a comedy in narrative, a story in essay-form, which is a classic in the world literature. This is Steele's first sketch in his account of the *Spectator* Club:

The first of our Society is a Gentleman from *Worcestershire,* of antient Descent, a Baronet, His Name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is call'd after him. All who know that Shire are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir Roger. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour, but his Singularities proceed from his good sense, and are Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Ene-

mies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and the more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in *Soho-Square*: it is said, he keeps himself a Batchelor by reason he was crossed in Love, by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him.

Before this disappointment Sir Roger was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord *Rochester* and Sir *George Etherege,* fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and Kick'd Bully *Dawson* in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill-used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a Year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were in fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his Merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve Times since he first wore it. He is now in his Fifty sixth Year, cheerful, gay and hearty, keeps a good House both in Town and Country; a great Lover of Mankind; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed: his Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company: when he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way up Stairs to a visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a Justice of the *Quorum;* that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session with great Abilities, and three Months ago gain'd universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act.

The next is Addison's account of Sir Roger's visit to the Abbey, with a vivid London prelude, which together make what is perhaps the most famous single essay in English literature:

As we went up the body of the church, the knight pointed at the trophies upon one of the monuments, and

cried out: "A brave man, I warrant him!" Passing afterwards by Sir Cloudesley Shovel, he flung his head that way, and cried: "Sir Cloudesley Shovel! A very gallant man!" As we stood before Busby's tomb, the knight uttered himself again after the same manner: "Dr. Busby! a great man! he whipped my grandfather; a very great man! I should have gone to him myself, if I had not been a blockhead; a very great man!"

We were immediately conducted into the little chapel on the right hand. Sir Roger, planting himself at our historian's elbow, was very attentive to everything he said, particularly to the account he gave us of the lord who had cut off the king of Morocco's head. Among several other figures, he was very well pleased to see the statesman Cecil upon his knees; and concluding them all to be great men, was conducted to the figure which represents that martyr to good housewifery who died by the prick of a needle. Upon our interpreter's telling us that she was a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, the knight was very inquisitive into the name and family; and after having regarded her finger for some time, "I wonder," says he, "that Sir Richard Baker has said nothing of her in his Chronicle."

We were then conveyed to the two coronation chairs, where my old friend, after having heard that the stone underneath, the most ancient of them, which was brought from Scotland, was called Jacob's pillar, sat himself down in the chair; and looking like the figure of an old Gothic king, asked our interpreter, "what authority they had to say that Jacob had ever been in Scotland"? The fellow, instead of returning him an answer, told him "that he hoped his honour would pay his forfeit." I could observe Sir Roger a little ruffled upon being thus trepanned; but our guide not insisting upon his demand, the knight soon recovered his good-humour, and whispered in my ear "if Will Wimble were with us, and saw those two chairs, it would go hard but he would get a tobacco-stopper out of one or t'other of them."

Sir Roger, in the next place, laid his hand upon Edward

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

CHARACTERS WHO FREQUENTED BUTTON'S COFFEE-HOUSE ABOUT THE YEAR 1720

After a drawing by Hogarth.

Button's Coffee-House was the meeting-place of Addison and his friends.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ADDISON'S WALK, OXFORD

Addison, the famous eighteenth-century essayist, was educated at Queen's College, Oxford.

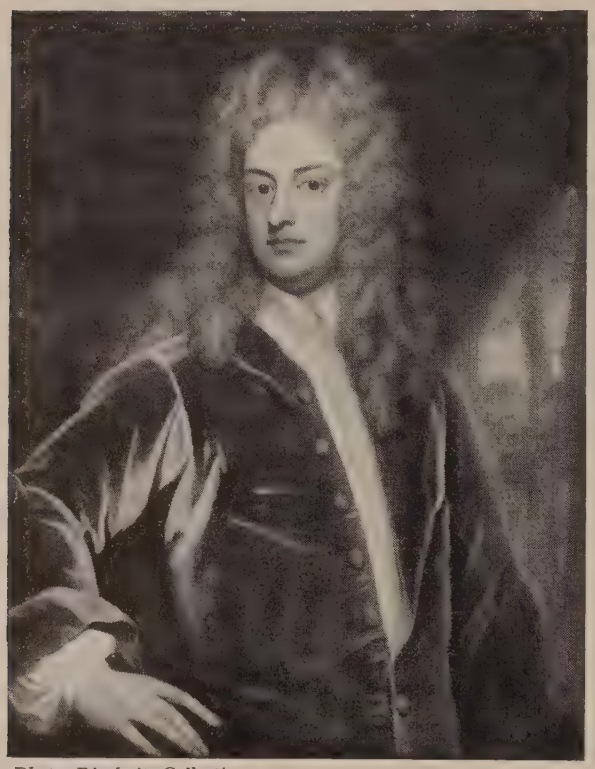

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOSEPH ADDISON, BY KNELLER

Bodleian Library.

Given to the University by Charlotte Addison, daughter of the subject, 1750.

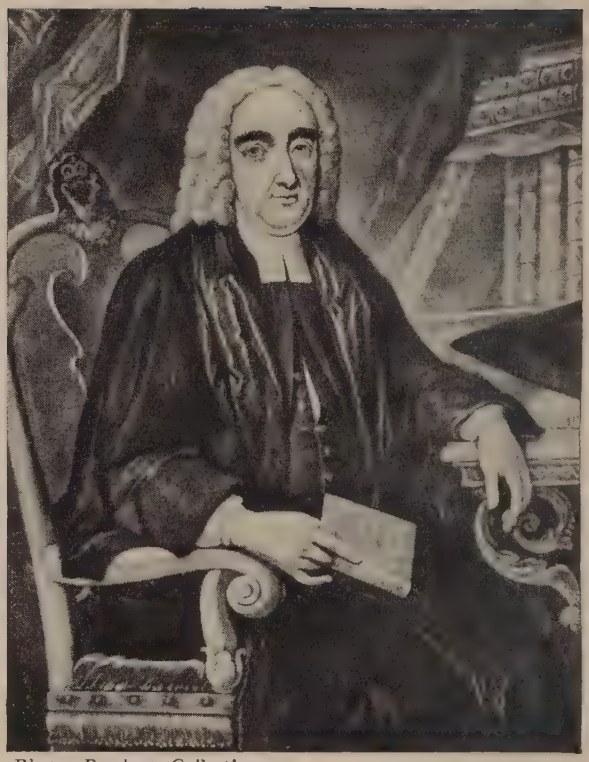

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JONATHAN SWIFT, AFTER MARKHAM

The famous Dean of St. Patrick's is the Voltaire of English literature, the master of bitter satire.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ALEXANDER POPE. ATTRIBUTED TO WILLIAM HOARE

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SIR RICHARD STEELE, BY J. RICHARDSON

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Steele was Addison's collaborator in the *Spectator*.

III's sword, and leaning upon the pommel of it, gave us the whole history of the Black Prince; concluding, that in Richard Baker's opinion, Edward III was one of the greatest princes that ever sat upon the English throne.

We were then shewn Edward the Confessor's tomb; upon which Sir Roger acquainted us, that "he was the first who touched for the evil": and afterwards Henry IV's; upon which he shook his head, and told us "there was fine reading in the casualities of that reign."

Our conductor then pointed to that monument where there is a figure of one of our English kings without a head; and upon giving us to know that the head which was of beaten silver, had been stolen away several years since; "Some Whig, I'll warrant," says Sir Roger: "you ought to lock up your kings better; they will carry off the body too, if you do not take care."

The glorious names of Henry V and Queen Elizabeth gave the knight great opportunities of shining, and of doing justice to Sir Richard Baker, "who," as our knight observed with some surprise, "had a great many kings in him whose monuments he had not seen in the abbey."

For my own part, I could not but be pleased to see the knight shew such an honest passion for the glory of his country, and such a respectful gratitude to the memory of its princes.

I must not omit, that the benevolence of my good old friend, which flows out towards every one he converses with, made him very kind to our interpreter, whom he looked upon as an extraordinary man; for which reason he shook him by the hand at parting, telling him that he should be very glad to see him at his lodgings in Norfolk Buildings, and talk over these matters with him more at leisure.

An Abbey Burial

Of the later years of Steele and Addison it is unnecessary to say much. The *Spectator* was followed by the *Guardian*, to which Steele was the principal contributor, Addison writing

about fifty of its papers. Both essayists passed to a great extent from literature to politics, Addison again becoming Chief Secretary for Ireland and Steele entering Parliament. Unfortunately their friendship did not survive in these changes, and the painful rupture which occurred between them in 1718 was not healed. Addison, indeed, died in the following year, after three years of unhappiness with Sarah, Countess of Warwick, with whom he had made a showy but most unsuitable marriage. He died at Holland House, June 17, 1719, at the early age of forty-seven. He is said to have sent the message to the young Earl of Warwick, whose tutor he had been: "Come and see in what peace a Christian can die." His body was buried at midnight in Westminster Abbey. Few nobler tributes have been written than those in which his old friend Thomas Tickell described the scene of his burial in the Abbey:

Can I forget the dismal night that gave
My soul's best part for ever to the grave?
How silent did his old companions tread,
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!
What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire;
The pealing organ, and the pausing choir;
The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid:
And the last words, that dust to dust conveyed!
While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,
Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend.
Oh, gone for ever! take this long adieu;
And sleep in peace next thy loved Montague.

Steele survived his old friend ten years—years saddened by the loss of his wife, his "dear Prue," to whom he wrote letters full of tender gallantry. He died far from London, at Carmarthen, September 1, 1729.

§ 3

JONATHAN SWIFT

The name of Jonathan Swift is one of the very greatest names in English literature, and the *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels* the greatest satires in the English language.

His Life and Character

Swift, though called "the great Irish patriot," was Irish only in the sense of having been born in Dublin of English parents. He was educated at Kilkenny, the best school in Ireland, where he had Congreve for a school-fellow, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was "stopped of his degree for dullness and insufficiency," obtaining it finally as an act of special grace. He became the amanuensis of his mother's relative, the rich and urbane Sir William Temple, and resided for a term of years as a dependent at Moor Park, where he saw Esther Johnson (Stella) grow up from a delicate child of eight into "one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London—her hair was blacker than a raven, and every feature of her face in perfection." At Temple's death he was already famous as a writer, having written *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. He was eventually recognised as the greatest of pamphleteers, and as a reward he obtained the Deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin, a piece of preferment which he regarded as the stepping-stone to far better things. But with the death of Queen Anne the party he served was not so much ruined as annihilated; and, retiring to Dublin, he threw in his lot with the Irish, the *Drapier's Letters* being the most splendid proofs of his whole-hearted patriotism. We see him in his fighting prime as a tall powerful man with a large unemotional face, in which flashed eyes of a wondrous azure that could look lightning. He died "from the top," as he foretold, being harassed all his life by a labyrinthine vertigo, and falling into mental decay he

gradually lost his faculties. He left his fortune to found a lunatic asylum in Dublin:

> And showed by one satiric touch
> No nation needed it so much.

He was not a comfortable companion, except to the high-placed personages whom he courted with an obsequiousness occasionally touched with insolence—for it was the place, not the man, he cultivated. At best, among his equals or inferiors, he was exacting, masterful; at worst, he was a brutal bully. Faulkner, his Dublin publisher, years after the Dean's death was dining with some friends, who chaffed him for his odd way of eating asparagus. They laughed at him when he confessed that the Dean had told him it was the right way. Whereupon Faulkner, with a touch of choler, exclaimed: "I tell you what it is, gentlemen; if you had ever dined with the Dean, you would have eaten your asparagus as he bade you." He had in him not a trace of courtesy which springs from the heart, and must be defined as formal kindliness. He loved to humiliate those who, for this reason or that, were debarred from hitting back or were afraid to do so. Dining at a certain house, where the part of the tablecloth next to him happened to have a small hole in it, he tore the hole as wide as he could, and ate his soup through it; his reason for such behaviour being, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house and teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery.

A loathly man—yet lovable, and beloved by one of the most delightful women in all literary history—the Stella who moves Thackeray to a sudden rapture: "Fair and tender creature! Pure and affectionate heart. . . . Gentle lady! So lonely, so loving, so unhappy . . . you are one of the saints of English story." Whether or not he married this lady will never be known; probably he did not, as his ruthless rejection of Vanessa, who wished to compel a marriage, proves that he was not a mar-

rying man. There is some mystery and misery in Swift's life which we shall never succeed in elucidating. That is why he remains one of the most piteous and perplexing personalities in the history of English literature. His bodily sufferings which ended in five terrible years of madness had doubtless something to do with the character of his literary works.

His hatred of mankind seems sincere enough; a burning indignation, more vehement than Juvenal's, consumes his vitals as he rages at the littlenesses, the treachery, and the mean injustice of his fellow-animals. And, to add insult to injury, he thrusts at mankind's armour of hypocrisy and self-esteem. In the terrible pages of *Gulliver's Travels* he has packed all his venom, all his rage and woe. And what a strange vengeance posterity has taken on the most vindictive of satirists. His gospel of hatred has become a book for the young and innocent, and has been eagerly read by generations of children. "After all it is a kind place, this planet," observes Mr. Birrell commenting on this signal act of poetic justice; "the best use we have for our cynics is to let them amuse the junior portion of our population."

Relations with Stella

The problem of Swift's relations with Stella is one of the most fascinating in the history of literature. The portions of his letters to her, which impart news or views or both, are written in a delightful gossiping style. Sometimes he makes little rhymes that have the air of being proverbs, such as:

> Be you lords or be you earls,
> You must write to naughty girls.

Swift's letters seem to show that love for a charming child had grown into the tender adoration of a beautiful, wise, and witty woman. This at least is certain—he loved her tenderly and truly, she was his one earthly joy. And the very fact that we

can never understand the nature of their intimacy is on the whole a thing to be glad of—for it shows that Swift had the moon's mysteriousness in that he had one face for the world and another, not to be seen save by her, for the woman he loved.

It is not so easy to avoid condemnation of the man in examining his affair with Vanessa (Esther Vanhomrigh), who fell passionately in love with him. He tells the first part of the story himself in a charming poem entitled "Cadenus and Vanessa," which was not written for publication. This poem ends with the heroine's promise to teach her world-weary and elderly counsellor the art of love, and there is the shadow of a promise in the final couplet:

> But what success Vanessa met
> Is to the world a secret yet.

In the end he had to choose between Stella and Vanessa, and his dismissal of the latter, though all the circumstances are not clear, strikes us as brutally abrupt.

A Master of Prose

He was a poet of power (despite Dryden's prophecy of failure), managing his octosyllabic line with the dexterity of a player at quarter-staff. But he is one of the very first masters of that English prose which is pithy rather than *pittoresque* and, based on a straightforward simplicity, lends at times to words and phrases the mass and momentum of things and actions. In style his prose is beyond criticism; in its matter it is the man in himself with all his odious faults, all the splendour of his genius, all his flashes of loving-kindness. Mr. George Saintsbury says: "If intellectual genius and literary art be taken together, no prose-writer, who is a prose-writer mainly, is Swift's superior, and a man might be hard put to it to say who among such writers in the plainer English can be pronounced his equal."

A brief discussion of his verse may fittingly begin with a

Reproduced from the Frontispiece in "Gulliver's Travels," by courtesy of the artist, Willy Pogány, and the publishers, The Macmillan Company.

A SCENE FROM GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

From a painting by Willy Pogány.

"I walked with the utmost circumspection, to avoid treading on any stragglers."

Photo: B. P. C.

"SWIFT AND STELLA," BY MARGARET ISABEL DICKSEE

Dean Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, first met Stella while he was living with Sir William Temple, and she was quite a child. She afterwards became a great and tragic figure in the drama of his life.

quotation from his lines "On the Death of Dr. Swift," neatly defined by Mr. Gosse as a maxim of Rochefoucauld expanded in five hundred lines, full of the bitter-sweet irony of the writer in his milder moods:

> My female friends, whose tender hearts
> Have better learn'd to act their parts,
> Receive the news in doleful dumps:
> "The Dean is dead: (Pray what is trumps?)
> Then, Lord have mercy on his soul!
> (Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
> Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall:
> (I wish I knew what king to call.)
> Madam, your husband will attend
> The funeral of so good a friend?
> No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight:
> And he's engaged to-morrow night:
> My Lady Club will take it ill,
> If he should fail her at quadrille.
> He loved the Dean—(I lead a heart)
> But dearest friends, they say, must part.
> His time was come: he ran his race:
> We hope he's in a better place."

He could make a phrase with a thorn to it, and define a character in a line (as when he defines a fop as "stock'd with the latest gibberish of the town"), but his verse lacks the memorableness of Dryden's and Pope's. His poetry is not often quoted, and his very Hudibrastic lines upon petty critics are probably the most familiar:

> The vermin only tease and pinch
> Their foes superior by an inch;
> So, naturalists observe a flea
> Has smaller fleas that on him prey,
> And these have smaller still to bite 'em,
> And so proceed *ad infinitum.*

"Tale of a Tub"

Swift, however, would be forgotten to-day except by professors and professional critics, but for his prose satires.

From the literary point of view his *Tale of a Tub* is the best of all; at the dismal ending of his life Swift is said to have exclaimed: "Good God, what a genius I was when I wrote that book!" The title originated in the rumoured custom of throwing a tub to whales to play with to prevent them jostling a ship. After a whimsical dedication to "Prince Posterity," we have a dissertation on oratorical machines, and another on the humours of Grub Street—after which the serious matter begins, and we are introduced to the father who dies and leaves legacies to his three sons, Peter (Church of Rome), Martin (Church of England), and Jack (Dissent).

His lesser works all show the satirical sparkle—sometimes bursting into a scorching flame of furious indignation—which was a new thing in English prose. It was as though he had continued the verse epigrams of Dryden, say with the latter's fluent easy prose in an absolutely novel form of composition.

"Gulliver's Travels"

But his fame in these latter days rests on *Gulliver's Travels,* which is a continuation of the Utopian idea with that of imaginary journeys burlesquing the old travellers' tales. Manifestly the book, even in its bowdlerised form, is a satire, and a ruthless one at that. Swift is not content, however, with making a fable or allegory; he develops the phases of Gulliver's story with the skill of Mr. H. G. Wells, say, as shown in his scientific fantasies, and uses every artifice—e. g. the details of Gulliver's career, the maps, and so forth—to create an illusion of reality in the reader's mind. That is why children, though they cannot grasp the satirical intention, read *Gulliver's Travels* with delight as a story of wonderful, yet credible events and experiences. Each section of the book displays the pettiness of mankind from a different angle.

In the "Voyage to Lilliput" we are shown ourselves as pigmies through the wrong end of a telescope as it were. Our af-

fairs, reduced to a miniature, seem diminutive and ridiculous—as a very small man does in the eyes of men of average dimensions. As Hazlitt points out, Gulliver's carrying off of the whole fleet of Blefuscu is "a mortifying stroke, aimed at national glory"—for the pomp and circumstance of naval warfare are reduced to toyshop scale and so made mirth-provoking.

> Lying down behind a hillock, I took out my small perspective glass, and viewed the enemy's fleet at anchor, consisting of about fifty men-of-war, and a great number of transports: I then came back to my house, and gave order (for which I had a warrant) for a great quantity of the strongest cable and bars of iron. The cable was about as thick as packthread, and the bars of the length and size of a knitting needle. I trebled the cable to make it stronger, and, for the same reason, I twisted three of the iron bars together, binding the extremities into a hook. Having thus fixed fifty hooks to as many cables, I went back to the north-east coast, and putting off my coat, shoes, and stockings, walked into the sea. . . .
>
> The enemy was so frightened when they saw me, that they leaped out of their ships, and swam to shore, where there could not be fewer than thirty thousand souls. I then took my tackling, and, fastening a hook to the hole at the prow of each, I tied all the cords together at the end. While I was thus employed, the enemy discharged several thousand arrows, many of which stuck in my hands and face, and, besides the excessive smart, gave me much disturbance in my work. . . . I went on boldly in spite of the enemy's arrows, many of which struck against the glasses of my spectacles, but without any other effect, farther than a little to discompose them. I had now fastened all the hooks, and, taking the knot in my hand, began to pull, but not a ship would stir, for they were all too fast held by their anchors, so that the boldest part of my enterprise remained. I therefore let go the cord, and leaving the hooks fixed to the ships, I resolutely cut with my knife the cables that fastened the anchors, receiving above two hundred shots in my face

> and hands; then I took up the knotted end of the cables to which my hooks were tied, and with great ease drew fifty of the enemy's largest men-of-war after me.

In Brobdingnag we look through the other end of the telescope. Gulliver is among giants who show a gigantic magnanimity, which contrasts with the pettiness of human beings.

It is almost impossible to open Swift's writings at any page without lighting upon some passage which has become a household word. Such, for instance, as the following:

> And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.

> He had been eight years upon a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, which were to be put in phials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers.

> The reason why so few marriages are happy is because young ladies spend their time in making nets, not in making cages.

Swift is both a glory and a disgrace of world-literature. In his books, in his life, he exposes to the mind's eye the lowest deeps and the loftiest heights of which the mutable spirit of man is capable. In him Reason, as the eighteenth century understood it, committed suicide.

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XVIII

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

§ 1

DEFOE

Defoe's Life

DANIEL DEFOE, the virtual founder of the British novel, was born in Fore Street in the City of London in 1659. His father was a butcher, and when he was a boy John Milton was one of his neighbours. The elder Defoe was a pious Dissenter and his enterprise was to make his son a preacher. Daniel was well educated, and after he had determined not to be a minister he set up for himself in business as an exporter of stockings in Freeman's Yard, Cornhill. It is impossible here to summarise all the incidents of a crowded life, all the ups and downs of an infinitely varied and generally troubled career. Defoe was writing almost to the day of his death, and he died a broken old man in lodgings off Moorfields in 1730. He was buried in the same graveyard as Bunyan and Isaac Watts the hymn-writer.

The world remembers Defoe with gratitude as the author of *Robinson Crusoe,* and has forgotten most of the rest of his voluminous writing. He was, indeed, the author of two hundred and fifty books! He wrote other novels besides *Robinson Crusoe,* of which the most interesting to-day are *Captain Jack, Moll Flanders,* and *Roxana.* They abound in intimate descriptions of London's common life in that period. He wrote history and biography, books of travel and poems, treatises on the com-

plete gentleman and the complete tradesman, manuals of conduct for parents and lovers, political pamphlets and satires. At one time in his life he wrote a newspaper with his own hand three times a week. He earned a great deal of money and lost it, and most of his life was spent in a very sea of trouble.

Defoe was a man of amazing energy and originality. He was a Whig, honestly interested in supporting the Union of Scotland, in preserving the Protestant succession to the throne, and in the repeal of the laws that penalised Dissenters. He was certainly not over-scrupulous. At one time he secured an engagement on the staff of Tory papers in order to take out the sting of attacks on the Whigs. But he did not live in a scrupulous age. Perhaps the most ironic incident in a career composed of irony was his writing of a burlesque attack on the Hanoverian succession, which was read seriously by dull people and landed its author in prison. It is interesting to recall that so fertile was Defoe's mind that among many modern enterprises foreshadowed in his works are a government register for sailors, agricultural credit banks, and national poor relief.

§ 2

"Robinson Crusoe"

Defoe was nearly sixty when *Robinson Crusoe* was published. The idea was of course taken from the story of the four solitary months that Alexander Selkirk spent on the island of Juan Fernandez in 1704. The character of Crusoe was to some extent the character of his creator—in his industry, his refusal to be beaten, his courage, and his faith in God. *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel of "human contrivance and homely wisdom." There is no humour in it, no pathos, and no mystery. It is a simple story written for simple people by a great master of narrative and description, and the book has an additional interest for the workaday world because of its author's Kiplingesque knowledge of the technicalities of half a dozen trades. Incredible

as it may seem, Defoe had great difficulty in finding a publisher. He showed *Robinson Crusoe* to the booksellers of Lombard Street, the Strand, Westminster, and Little Britain in vain. But William Taylor, of the Ship, in Paternoster Row, who was young enough to be Defoe's son, saw his chance and seized it. Between April, when it appeared, and August four editions were called for, and even a hostile critic had to admit that it was "famed from Tuttle Street to Limehouse Hole," and that "every old woman leaves it as a legacy with *Pilgrim's Progress, The Practice of Piety,* and *God's Revenge Against Murther,* to her posterity." The charm of the story really lies not in adventure, but in its picture of a man forced to live the simple life, to build, to bake, to contrive, and to preserve his cheerfulness and piety. Dickens remarked that in all its pages there is nothing to make a man laugh or cry; and this is about true. Yet *Robinson Crusoe* stands alone; it has been translated into countless languages, and has been read even by Arabs in the desert.

The importance of *Robinson Crusoe* in literary history is that it is fiction deliberately intended to pass as fact. Charles Lamb said of Defoe's stories: "It is impossible to believe, while you are reading them, that a real person is not narrating to you everywhere nothing but what really happened to himself." And Lamb adds that Defoe's success was largely due to "the extreme homeliness of his style." He was a realist to the extent of making his characters speak as such people speak in real life, and, as most of his characters belong to the class of the unlettered, we have in Defoe, as both Coleridge and Lamb have pointed out, "infinite repetition and an overacted exactness" which merely add to the realism. Defoe's greatest triumph in "inventing truth" is his *Journal of the Plague Year,* absolutely fiction, accepted as fact when it was published, and since often quoted by trustful historians as a record of actual events. Defoe had been only five years old in the year of the Plague.

Robinson Crusoe may be properly regarded as an early attempt at realistic fiction, and in his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* Defoe invented the form of the historical novel, in which real and imaginary persons are both introduced, the method of Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas. In all Defoe wrote six novels, three of them picaresque stories of crime—in each case with well-emphasised morals, the tediousness of which does not take away from the interest in the stories as vivid pictures of English life in the reign of Queen Anne.

§ 3

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Despite the success of the French novelists of the early eighteenth century, and we may mention Le Sage, the author of *Gil Blas,* and the Abbé Prévost, author of *Manon Lescaut;* despite Defoe and the earlier English experiments in fiction, the English novel, as we know it, was not created until Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* was published in 1740. Novel-reading has often been denounced by moralists, and it is, therefore, interesting to note that *Pamela,* "in every strict sense the earliest English novel," was written to inculcate morality and to protect the inexperienced. Richardson was a moralist above all other things. Johnson said that he taught "the passions to move at the command of virtue."

Richardson's Life

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire in 1689. Very little is known about his boyhood, though he has told us that when he was eleven he took on himself to write an admonitory letter, full of Scriptural texts, to a backbiting widow of fifty, and that when he was thirteen he wrote love-letters for a number of young women who were acquaintances of his family. When he was seventeen he was apprenticed to a printer in

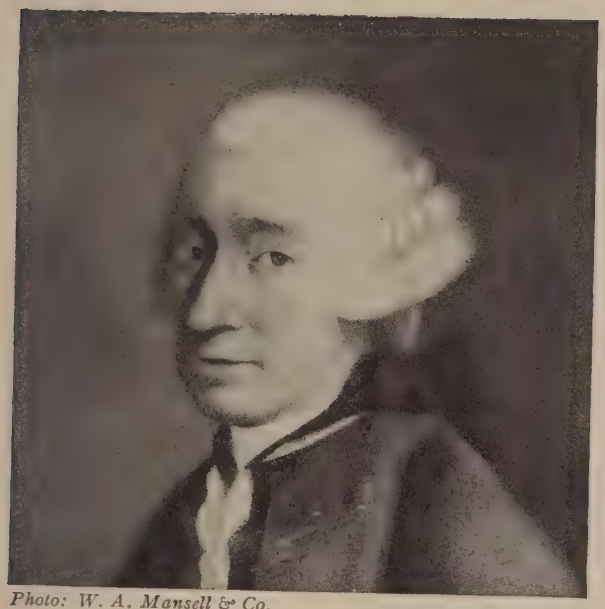

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

National Portrait Gallery, London.

The Scottish author of *Peregrine Pickle*.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

LAURENCE STERNE

The author of *Tristram Shandy*.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"YORICK AND THE GRISETTE," BY GILBERT STUART NEWTON

Tate Gallery, London.

An incident in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON, BY JOSEPH HIGHMORE

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bookseller and novelist, Samuel Richardson may fairly be regarded as the father of the modern novel.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

"ROBINSON CRUSOE EXPLAINING THE SCRIPTURES TO FRIDAY," BY A. FRASER

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"DEFOE IN THE PILLORY," BY EYRE CROWE

Defoe, who was among many other things a political journalist, was pilloried for writing his *Shortest Way with Dissenters.*

Aldersgate Street, and in 1719 he began business for himself in a court off Fleet Street. Two years later he completed his resemblance to Hogarth's industrious apprentice by marrying his old master's daughter. Richardson was fifty years old when he first began to write *Pamela.* The heroine, a simple, innocent country girl, led astray by her dissolute master, conquers in the end, and is rewarded by becoming his wife. *Pamela* was followed by *Clarissa, or the Adventures of a Young Lady,* in 1748, and by the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753 and 1754. Richardson was an eighteenth-century middle-class cockney, sharing all the prejudices and limitations of his class. To quote Leslie Stephen: "He looked upon freethinkers with such horror that he will not allow even his worst villains to be religious sceptics; he shares the profound reverence of the shopkeepers for the upper classes who are his customers, and he rewards virtue with a coach and six. And yet this mild little man, with the very narrowest intellectual limitations, writes a book which makes a mark not only in England but in Europe, and is imitated by Rousseau in the book which set more than one generation weeping; *Clarissa,* moreover, was accepted as the masterpiece of its kind, and she moved not only Englishmen but Germans and Frenchmen to sympathetic tears."

Richardson told his stories by means of letters, and in this way he was able to reveal much more of the minds of his characters than can be revealed by the autobiographical method of *Robinson Crusoe.*

"Clarissa"

Judged from the modern point of view, Richardson is a tiresome mawkish sentimentalist. Leslie Stephen complains that he rubs the noses of his readers in the agony of his heroines, "squeezing the last drop of bitterness out of every incident." But it must be remembered that Richardson wrote for his own time and particularly for the women of his own time, and apart

from their importance in literary history, Richardson's novels played a considerable part in the development of the democratic idea. It was a novel idea in the eighteenth century that a servant girl simply became a heroine of romance. From every point of view *Clarissa* is Richardson's most important novel. Austin Dobson has admirably summarised its plot:

> Entangled henceforth in an inextricable network of lies, intrigue and deception, the poor girl, alienated from her friends, and unsuspecting in her own goodness and purity, is decoyed into the company of some of the most worthless of her sex and finally betrayed while under the influence of opiates. After various experiences in a spunging-house, and different hiding-places, she finally settles down, broken-hearted, to die. Her relations reject her; and though Lovelace, in his intermittent moments of remorse, is willing to marry her, her pride and inherent nobility of character, make such a solution out of the question. Serene in the consciousness of her innocence, "unviolated (as she says) in her will," but mortally wounded, Clarissa gradually fades away, and finally dies, leaving her suddenly awakened relatives distracted by remorse for her fate, while Lovelace, who has richly deserved the gallows, is compassionately killed in a duel by her cousin and guardian, Colonel William Morden.

Both *Pamela* and *Clarissa* were translated into French by the Abbé Prévost, and Richardson's novels had an enormous contemporary vogue on the Continent. Diderot, the great eighteenth-century French philosopher, considered him the equal of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. He was warmly admired by Mme. de Staël and by Rousseau, whose *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was modelled on *Clarissa,* and years afterwards Alfred de Musset, the French poet, declared that *Clarissa* was the greatest novel in the world. There is an amusing story of Madame de Staël, a supersentimentalist, journeying all the way from Paris to London to weep on Richardson's tomb. She

stopped at the Golden Cross Hotel and was found, the next morning, weeping bitter tears in St. Bride's churchyard in Fleet Street on the tomb of the wrong Richardson, a worthy but unliterary butcher.

§ 4

HENRY FIELDING

A Great Writer

If Richardson invented the English novel, Henry Fielding, the Hogarth of Literature, gave it, for the first time, absolute literary distinction. When he began to write, Fielding had already acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the life of his time. He had come into personal contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Fielding was not only a great writer, he was, in all essentials, a typical Englishman, as Leslie Stephen has written, "the big, full-blooded, vigorous mass of roast beef who will stand no nonsense, and whose contempt for the fanciful and arbitrary tends towards the coarse and materialistic."

Henry Fielding was born in 1707 near Glastonbury in Somerset. He was educated at Eton and came to London in 1727, among other things, for the first time making the acquaintance of his famous second cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. For some years Fielding gained a more or less precarious livelihood by writing plays. His mother was dead, his father had married again, his allowance from home was small and intermittent, and, as he himself said, he had to choose between being a hackney coachman or a hackney writer. He married in 1734, but this did not much modify his Bohemian life. He was called to the Bar when he was thirty-three and joined the Western Circuit. His first novel, *Joseph Andrews,* was published in 1742, for which he received from his publisher the sum of £83 11s. It was intended as a burlesque of Richardson's *Pamela,* and Fielding set out to ridicule Richardson by transferring

Pamela's embarrassments to her brother. The story is remarkable for the famous character of Parson Adams, the lovable country curate, as distinguished for his poverty as his learning; his ignorance of the world, his zeal and virtuous simplicity, his absence of mind, his oddities and little predicaments, excite the mirth and win the love and esteem of every reader of *Joseph Andrews.* Goldsmith copied the character of Parson Adams when he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

In 1743 he published the *History of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great,* an ironic biography of the notorious thief-taker, illustrating, as Austin Dobson neatly says, "the general proposition that greatness without goodness is no better than badness." *Tom Jones, or the History of a Foundling,* was published in 1749, Fielding being paid £700 by his publisher. *Amelia* was published in 1742, the author receiving £1,000. In 1748 Fielding was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex and Westminster, an office which gave him £300 a year and a house in Bow Street. Despite constant ill-health he was assiduous in his legal duties, writing valuable pamphlets and striving hard to deal with the insistent roguery of eighteenth-century London, so vividly portrayed in his own *Jonathan Wild* and in his friend Hogarth's drawings. In 1754 he became so desperately ill that he resigned his office and left London for Lisbon, suffering horrible discomforts on the journey. The story of the voyage is told in the pamphlet *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,* published after its author's death. Fielding reached Lisbon in August, 1754. He died there two months later, and was buried in the English cemetery.

Richardson wrote for women. Fielding wrote for men. Richardson was a super-sentimentalist, Fielding was a realist. The two writers were antipathetic. In his famous eulogy of Fielding's "athletic and boisterous genius," Thackeray says: "He couldn't do otherwise than laugh at the puny, cockney bookseller, pouring out endless volumes of sentimental twaddle,

and hold him up to scorn as a mollcoddle and a milksop. *His* genius had been nursed on sack-posset, and not on dishes of tea. *His* muse had sung the loudest in tavern choruses, had seen the daylight streaming in over thousands of emptied bowls, and reeled home to chambers on the shoulders of the watchman. Richardson's goddess was attended by old maids and dowagers, and fed on muffins and bohea."

"Tom Jones"

Critical opinion has acclaimed Fielding's genius. Hazlitt said: "As a painter of real life he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare." Gibbon, the great historian, a man not given to fulsome eulogy, declared: "The successors of Charles V may disdain their brethren of England: but the romance of *Tom Jones,* that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escurial and the Imperial Eagle of Austria." It has. The Escurial was partly destroyed by fire in 1872. The Imperial Eagle of Austria was cast into the dust in 1918. And the world still reads *Tom Jones.* Gibbon was a true prophet, and as Thackeray said: "To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

Tom Jones is without question Fielding's masterpiece, and it remains one of the half-dozen greatest novels in the English language. It does not contain so lovable a creation as Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews,* but it bristles with clearly defined characters as human and as good to know as the characters created by Dickens himself. Allworthy, that compound of coldness and excellence; the younger Blifil, the hypocrite; Squire Western, the boisterous, brutal, jovial Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era; Parson Thwackum, the bigot; the immortal Partridge, of ignorance and vanity complete; Lady Bellaston, the fashionable sensualist, who, as Austin Dobson has

suggested, might well have been drawn by Balzac; Sophia Western herself, "the first unsentimentalised flesh and blood heroine." The hero, Tom Jones, is a rake, fond of drink and play, scornfully described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as "a sorry scoundrel." But Tom Jones was brave, generous, and courteous, in his vices the child of his time, and, despite his vices, very much a man.

A great writer, a great wit, a man of unconquerable spirit was "manly English, Harry Fielding."

§ 5

LAURENCE STERNE

His Life

Laurence Sterne, the author of *Tristram Shandy,* was born in Ireland in November, 1713. His father was an ensign in a foot regiment which had served in Flanders and which was disbanded the day after Laurence was born. For a year Laurence with his father and mother stayed with his grandmother in Yorkshire, and then, for nine years, the family led the uncomfortable wandering life of an eighteenth-century soldier, never staying for more than a few months in one place. Sterne retained a considerable affection for his father, who was to some extent the model of "My Uncle Toby."

When he was eighteen, he went with the help of his relatives, to Jesus College, Cambridge. He took Holy Orders, and in 1738 obtained, through the influence of an uncle, the living of Sutton-in-the-Forest, near York. He married in 1741 and was presented to the neighbouring living of Stillington, doing duty at both places and also becoming a prebendary of York Cathedral. The first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* were published at York in 1759 and they at once made Sterne famous. Other volumes appeared in 1761, 1762, and 1765. He was lion-

ised by London society, and incidentally presented with the perpetual curacy of Coxwold.

"Tristram Shandy"

Mr. Gosse has described *Tristram Shandy* as an example "of the kind of loosely strung reflective fiction which is hardly a narrative at all." In the strict sense of the word, *Tristram Shandy* is perhaps no more a novel than *The Sentimental Journey*. It is, however, the work of one of the great English humorists, and it contains in Uncle Toby at least a character with a right of place among the immortals. *Tristram Shandy* purposes to be the life of Tristram Shandy, but it is nothing of the sort. At the beginning of the book, the real hero is Shandy senior, who personifies theory run mad, and incidentally, in this first part, there is a vivid sketch, none too complimentary, of Yorick, the incumbent of the parish, who is Sterne himself. As the book proceeds, "My Uncle Toby," the old half-pay soldier, is its hero. Hazlitt has declared that "My Uncle Toby" is "the most unoffending of God's creatures" and "one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature." Mr. Walter Sichel has summarised "My Uncle Toby" as: "A man human in every vein, simple, serious, an amusing grown-up child whose long experience of war taught him to love mankind more than glory or pleasure, and to find in the soldier's temper the greatest surety for peace; loyal, brave, modest, affectionate, reverent, who 'never spoke of the being and attributes of God but with hesitation'; considerate for all, eager to protect the lives and fortunes of the *few* from the plunderings of the *many*."

Carlyle compared Sterne to Cervantes. Other writers have found resemblance between him and Rabelais. But while Rabelais guffawed, Sterne sniggered. The coarseness and indecency of his writing cannot be accounted for by the fact that he lived in a coarser age. It was something inherent in the man,

sick in health and mean in mind, who, despite his gift of humour, was barred from real greatness by the qualities of his soul. He moved Thackeray to something like disgust. "There is not," wrote the author of *Vanity Fair,* "a page in Sterne's writing but has something that were better away, a latent corruption—a hint, as of an impure presence. . . . The foul Satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly." And Coleridge declared that Sterne should be censured for "using the best dispositions of our nature as the panders and condiments for the basest." All this is true—but "My Uncle Toby" remains!

A Tragic Death

In 1765 Sterne made a long tour through Italy and France, the result of which was his famous *Sentimental Journey.* Three days after the publication of this book in 1768, Sterne died in his lodgings in Old Bond Street.

On a March afternoon in 1768 a party sat at dinner in John Crawford's rooms in Clifford Street. The Dukes of Roxburghe and Grafton were there, and Garrick and Hume. They all knew that in Bond Street, a stone's-throw away, Laurence Sterne was lying ill, and by general consent a footman was sent to inquire how he did. That footman was the only person who saw the author of *Tristram Shandy* die. Sent upstairs by the landlady, he found the great author *in extremis.* Afterwards he wrote some curious memoirs, in which the scene is described: "I went into the room and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes, and in five he said, 'Now it is come'! He put up his hands as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute." Where this happened Agnew's Art Gallery now stands.

In addition to *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey,* Sterne published several volumes of sermons, which, according to modern divines, have many outstanding merits. The collection of his letters was published some seven years after his death.

§ 6

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

Tobias Smollett was born in Dumbartonshire in 1721. He qualified as a doctor at Glasgow University and was apprenticed to a surgeon in that city. At the age of eighteen he made the journey south which every ambitious Scotch youth has made for generations, a journey which he afterwards described in the early chapters of his *Roderick Random*. In 1741 he obtained a position as surgeon's mate on H.M.S. *Cumberland*. He served in the Navy until 1744, and then, having married the daughter of a Jamaica planter, he set up as a surgeon in Downing Street, failing, however, to make much of a living either as a doctor or as a playwright. *The Adventures of Roderick Randon* was published in 1748, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* in 1749, *The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom* in 1753, *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* in 1762, and *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* in 1771. In addition to these novels, Smollett wrote plays, travel books, poetry, medical pamphlets, and a history of England.

The finest of Smollett's few poems is "The Tears of Scotland." It was written after the Battle of Culloden, which set all London "mafficking." The first and last of its seven stanzas are these:

> Mourn, hapless, Caledonia, mourn
> Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn!
> Thy sons, for valour long renowned,
> Lie slaughtered on their native ground;
> Thy hospitable roofs no more
> Invite the stranger to the door;
> In smoky ruins sunk they lie,
> The monuments of cruelty.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> While the warm blood bedews my veins,
> And unimpaired remembrance reigns,

Resentment of my country's fate
Within my filial breast shall beat;
And, spite of her insulting foe,
My sympathizing verse shall flow:
"Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn."

"Roderick Random"

Le Sage was Smollett's master, and in *Roderick Random* we have the same series of adventures more or less loosely linked together as we find in *Gil Blas,* the adventures being largely the author's own, the result being "a vigorous and swinging tale of adventure."

Peregrine Pickle has many resemblances to *Roderick Random,* and is even more autobiographical. One characteristic of *Peregrine Pickle* is that, for money down, Smollett put into his book the account of two living people who had nothing to do with the story, thus, as Mr. Hannay says, combining journalism with novel-writing.

"Humphry Clinker"

Sir Walter Scott considered that *Humphry Clinker* is the "most pleasing of Smollett's novels"; and all the world agrees with him. Thackeray says: "*Humphry Clinker* is, I do think, the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel writing began."

"In *Humphry Clinker,*" says Mr. George Saintsbury, "we have the very best of all his works. It is written in the letter form, the scenes and humours of many places in England and Scotland are rendered with admirable picturesqueness, while the book has seldom been excelled for humorous character of the broad and farcical kind. Matthew Bramble, the testy hypochondriac squire who is at heart one of the best of men, and in head not one of the foolishest; his sour-visaged and greedy sister Tabitha; her maid Winifred Jenkins, who has learnt the art of grotesque misspelling from Swift's Mrs. Harris, and has im-

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JANE AUSTEN

Born in 1775 and died in 1817. Jane Austen was the first English woman writer of realistic fiction.

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DRINKING TO HER BEST AFFECTIONS

From Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility.*

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"MR. DARCY, YOU MUST ALLOW ME TO PRESENT THIS YOUNG LADY TO YOU AS A VERY DESIRABLE PARTNER"

From Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*

proved upon the teaching; the Scotch soldier of fortune, Lismahago—these are among the capital figures of English fiction."

Like Fielding, Smollett died and was buried in a foreign country, in Leghorn in 1771.

§ 7

MRS. RADCLIFFE AND MISS EDGEWORTH

Anne Radcliffe

Mrs. Radcliffe, the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other stories, was an ingenious writer, much admired by Scott, a good story-teller, unhampered by a sense of humour, whose style has been faithfully copied in the modern novelette. She dealt in the night side of life, in the mystery of desolate valleys and tapestried corridors, and in the art of making a reader's blood run cold. As Sir Walter Scott, who respected her genius, said, her appeal was to "the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers or by the suggestions of superstition. . . . To break off the narrative when it seemed just on the point of becoming most interesting—to extinguish a lamp just when a parchment containing some hideous secret ought to be read—to exhibit shadowy forms and half-heard sounds of woe—are resources which Mrs. Radcliffe employed with more effect than any other writer of romance." A contemporary wrote of her after her time:

> O Radcliffe! thou once wert the charmer.
> Of girls who sat reading all night!
> Thy heroes were striplings in armour,
> Thy heroines damsels in white.

Such a girl was Jane Austen's first heroine, Catherine Morland, through whom (in *Northanger Abbey*) she pokes fun at the Radcliffe tradition.

Maria Edgeworth

In the year 1800 Maria Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent*. Miss Edgeworth was essentially a moralist. She called

her stories "Moral Tales" and she was interested in the homely rather than in the heroic virtues. She was an Irishwoman, and when Scott wrote *Waverley* he professed that his ambition was "in some degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits of Miss Edgeworth." Her portraits of Ireland, in other words were recognised by Scott as an artist's record of the country, and though she was indeed a moralist, her books hold their place by their fidelity to fact, and by their admirably natural manner. Miss Edgeworth's stories, *Castle Rackrent* and *The Absentee,* give vivid pictures of the condition of certain estates in Ireland which were in the ownership of landlords living in England and the management of which was left in the hands of unsympathetic or ineffective superintendents. Miss Edgeworth's stories for children, the most important of which is the collection known as the *Parent's Assistant,* have held their own as classics for more than a century, and have given pleasure to several generations of English-speaking youngsters throughout the world. Contemporary with Miss Edgeworth was the Scottish Susan Ferrier, whom Scott called his "sister shadow," a novelist with a somewhat bitter wit more like Jane Austen than the "moral" Maria Edgeworth.

§ 8

JANE AUSTEN

With Jane Austen, this survey of the beginning of modern fiction may fitly end.

The Perfect Realist

How did Jane Austen excel? The answer is prompt. She was a realist. And as a realist, within her own delicately drawn pen-and-ink circle, she was perfect—a word often applied too carelessly, but here most miraculously justified. She was the chronicler of that most breathless and fascinating fairy-tale in the world, the fairy-tale of our own daily life. Jane Austen set down, for our infinite cosy content, the enthralling details of our-

selves and our neighbours—for in essentials a century is lightly spanned—walking and driving and conversing; eating, too, with greater or less appetite, according to the state of our affections. Minor differences there were, of course, between Jane Austen's characters and ourselves. They set higher store on the outward observances of good breeding than we do nowadays. For the rest, they gossiped, and fell in love, and danced, and made mistakes; and occasionally travelled a little by post-chaise or carriage. And if they suffered, it was usually more annoyance than tragedy.

Jane Austen put it all down because it never struck her that it might not be interesting. She was not preoccupied with Form or Art or the Limitations of the Novel, or other inventions of the High-brow to hamper spontaneity. How marvellously Jane Austen, with her elvish talent for burlesquing a prevalent mania, which twinkles and stings in *Love and Friendship* and *Northanger Abbey,* would have twinkled and stung at the expense of an English Hotel Rambouillet!

Yet, as Mr. Saintsbury has admirably said,

> "Simple as are the plots, they are worked out with extraordinary closeness and completeness, and the characters and dialogue are of such astonishing *finesse* and life that it would hardly matter if there were no plot at all. From first to last this hold on life never fails Miss Austen, nor does the simple, suggestive, half-ironic style in which she manages to convey her meaning. Not even Scott's or Thackeray's characters dwell in the mind more securely than John Thorpe, the bragging, babbling undergraduate in *Northanger Abbey,* and the feather-brained, cold-hearted flirt, his sister Isabella; than the Bennet family in *Pride and Prejudice,* every member of which is a masterpiece, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the arrogant lady patroness, and Mr. Collins, her willing toady; than Mrs. Norris, half sycophant, half tyrant, in *Mansfield Park;* than the notable chatterer Miss Bates in *Emma.*"

§ 9

Her Life

Biographers regret that the definite facts which can be supplied about Jane Austen's life and doings are few. She was born at Steventon in Hampshire in 1775; her father was a clergyman of moderate means; she had five brothers, four older and one younger than herself; and one intimate and adored elder sister, Cassandra. Two of her brothers became sailors. Jane had a moderately sufficient education and went to school at Reading. She was attractive to look at, and accomplished in games of skill, drawing, music, and needlework; graceful and "finished" in all her movements, and an animated correspondent. As for her literary career, it was, like her life, without extremes; she was neither left to pine in a garret nor feasted as a genius. In fact, she rarely visited London at all; after Steventon, her father moved with his family to Bath. After his death, Mrs. Austen, with Jane and Cassandra, went to live at Southampton.

When Jane Austen died at Winchester in 1817, at the age of forty-two, she was practically unknown in the literary world. She had not put her name to her four published novels (*Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma*), though she had allowed her authorship to be known among her friends. In an age of abounding literary society she had met no famous writer or editor and had corresponded with none. She was never in touch with the book-market. Her novels usually lay in her desk a long time before they appeared, and they did not come out in the order in which she wrote them. Her earliest was sold to a Bath publisher in 1803 for £10, and he did nothing with it. A few years later she bought it back from him for the same sum, he little knowing that she was the author of four popular novels. This, the earliest of her stories, did not appear, however, until a year after her death, when it was accompanied through the press by her latest, *Persuasion.*

In all she had received for her novels at the time of her death £700. She was entirely without the money-making idea, and when she secured £150 for *Sense and Sensibility* she considered this sum "a prodigious recompense for what had cost her nothing."

§ 10

The lack of facts in our knowledge of Jane Austen certainly need not mean a lack of intimacy. If we know little, we also know everything. Her books are there; and surmising where two twos undoubtedly make five, is always a fascinating pastime. Thus we surmise that she was indolent, for she rarely troubled to invent situations or emotions, but utilised those that were handy, and within her easy reach and cognisance. The same plot, what there was of it, served again and again. Therefore, we argue from analogy, she also did not invent her characters, but drew them from among her acquaintances. It is a pleasing reflection that Mr. Collins and Mrs. Allen and Selina with her "barouche-landau," were actual living people. She had the rare vision to see what was already there, and to enchant it into delicious immobility for our future benefit. Vision, but no imagination. That lack of imagination might account for her unseeing indifference to the lower classes; she can sympathise with straitened means—but her understanding halts and goes numb and blind at the possibility of no means at all.

This, too, Jane Austen's books have revealed to us about Jane Austen: that she lived her short life singularly free from fear. Fear breeds obsessions, and no obsessions have found an outlet in those six novels, so precious for their well-balanced outlook and serene philosophy; except, perhaps, the fear of misunderstanding, and parting through misunderstanding; this indeed, occurs over and over again between her hero and heroine. Elizabeth and Darcy are separated through Wickham's misrepre-

sentations: Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney through the inexplicable behaviour of the latter's father; Emma and Knightly because he firmly believes Emma has given her heart to Frank Churchill; Elinor Dashwood and Edward . . . the list swells; but perhaps the most feeling example is the long misunderstanding between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, owing to Anne's submission to worldly persuasion that he was not a suitable match. *Persuasion* was the last and most mature of Jane Austen's books, and one cannot miss in it the depth of personal conviction in Anne's ruined happiness—for twenty-seven was at that period a hopeless age for a woman to have reached without attaining matrimony. Who cares to, may read a hint of longing in *Persuasion's* final chapters of perfect reconciliation between Anne and Wentworth: "Thus it should have been—thus it might have been . . . for me!" Were those the author's secret thoughts at the time of writing? Her biographers have traced, from various sources, the existence of one outstanding love-affair in Jane Austen's life. Whether pride or circumstances or death prevented a happy conclusion, is not known. But the knowledge of it adds poignancy to the fact that her every last chapter is a summary of quiet rapture with anticipations into a future of unbroken wedded felicity.

The Theme of her Novels

In a letter to a friend Jane Austen compared her novels to "a little bit of ivory, two inches thick," on which she worked "with a brush so fine as to produce little effect after much labour." Never was there such exquisite manners-painting; but the plots are of the slightest. For example, that of *Sense and Sensibility* is really a study of the opposing characters of Elinor Dashwood, who stands for "Sense," and of her sister Marianne, who is the embodiment of "Sensibility"; while the plot is just the narrative of the widely different manner in which they act towards their lovers, and their friends. In *Pride and Prejudice* there are again

two opposing characters, a priggish lover, Darcy, and a girl of sense and spirit, Elizabeth Bennet, and the plot, if so it can be called, tells only how they squabbled, came gradually to like each other, and were married and lived happily at last. *Mansfield Park* is the story of a young girl, Fanny Price, left penniless, who is adopted into the family circle of her cousins, two sisters, and a son, Edmond; and the plot is little more than the way in which he falls in and out of love with Fanny and how they are married in the end. But these gossamer threads of story are woven into a fabric all a-glisten with the lights and shades of life.

Her principal themes were family life, and—what is rarer in to-day's realism, but evidently played an important part then—neighbourly life, its ebb and flow, actions and reactions, gossip, opportunities of matchmaking, and discussions as to the exact niceties of behaviour. The complications which modern fiction creates out of temperament then arose mainly from class distinction. Preoccupation with class distinction is so clearly the basis of all major and minor incidents and reflections in Jane Austen's books, that it cannot be ignored as mere personal snobbery on the part of the author. Obviously the upper classes were then soaked to the bone in it. Jane could chuckle at the exaggerated snobbery of Mr. Collins, of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, of General Tilney and Sir Walter Elliott and Mr. Elton; but she was certainly not free from it herself; she deprecates marriage where there is any disparity of birth; she converses most seriously on incomes, dowries, rank, and occupation; a slip of good manners in one of her creatures is at once shown up and dwelt upon at length. Emma talks pages of sheer rot to her protégée, Harriet, about the "consequence" she will gain by entering a house like Hartfield on equal footing with its young mistress; Darcy is condemned for jibing at Elizabeth because some of her relations are in trade—and this, with Emma's reluctance to honour the worthy Coles with her presence at dinner,

proves that trade was then very far from mixing with gentility; and that, in spite of the French Revolution, democracy was a long way from England.

Apparently, snobbery and prejudice were at this period, as eternally, peculiar to the older generation; and the young folk, impatient of restriction, were just beginning to emerge from it, winning for themselves more freedom of thought and independence of movement than formerly.

The theme which never alters! The novelists of a hundred years hence will surely still be writing of it.

But Jane Austen chiefly owes her fame to her exquisite and unparalleled gift of comedy. Posterity can never be sufficiently grateful for Mr. Collins, Mr. Woodhouse, Miss Bates, Lady Bertram, Mr. Rushworth, Isabella Thorpe, Miss Jennings, Mrs. Bennet.

To the reader who asks that a novel shall take him "out of himself," Jane Austen's appeal is small. But is that quality the test of a good novel? Is not the true test its power to take us *into* ourselves—that is to say, into our human nature, of which the true and lively exhibition is the very purpose of all drama? It is possible to make truth look small. The map of Jane Austen's world looks insignificant at a first glance, but, within it, all is truth, wit, sense, and proportion. The plot seems to be inevitable to the characters, and the characters the very natives of the plot.

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JANE AUSTEN.

Of Jane Austen's works, there are many editions.

XIX

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

§ 1

CHATTERTON

THOMAS CHATTERTON is the most pathetic and dramatic figure in the history of English poetry of the period between Pope and Burns. He was born at Bristol in 1752. For generations his family had held the office of sexton in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and during the poet's life his uncle occupied the family position. His father, who died before his birth, was a musician, something of a poet, and a student of occultism. Chatterton spent his childhood roaming about St. Mary's, learning from his uncle the story of the knights and ecclesiastics whose tombs are in the church, and spelling out old deeds and manuscripts which he found in the muniment room.

He was a lonely precocious boy, writing clever satires before he was twelve, and living his real life in the bygone ages of chivalry and colour. While he was still at school he imagined the romance of one Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century monk and poet, whose patron was Master William Canynge, a famous Bristol worthy. Chatterton's persistent study of old manuscripts and his eerie understanding of mediæval England enabled him to write a queer kind of old English, the merit and beauty of which may be gathered from the following quotation from his "The Storie of William Canynge":

> Straight was I carried back to times of yore,
> Whilst Canynge swathed yet in fleshly bed,
> And saw all actions which had been before,

And all the scroll of Fate unravelled;
And when the fate-marked babe acome to sight,
I saw him eager gasping after light.
In all his sheepen gambols and child's play,
In every merrymaking, fair, or wake,
I kenn'd a perple light of wisdom's ray;
He ate down learning with the wastel-cake:
As wise as any of the aldermen,
He'd wit enow to make a mayor at ten.

The boy knew that if he admitted that he himself was the author of poems written in an archaic jargon, no one would read them. So he launched one of the most famous of all literary masquerades. He pretended that his poems were the actual work of Thomas Rowley, and that he had discovered the manuscript in a chest in St. Mary Redcliffe. In order to get his manuscript printed, he wrote to Horace Walpole, whose *Castle of Otranto* had just been published, and whose interest in mediæval romance seemed to assure a measure of sympathy and understanding. At first Walpole was interested; but when Chatterton wrote to ask his help in obtaining congenial occupation in London, the ever cautious Horace discovered that the boy's poetry was really modern and coldly advised the poet to stick to his position in an attorney's office and to postpone the writing of poetry "until he should have made a fortune."

One of his most beautiful pieces of verse is the Minstrel's Song in *Aella,* from which we quote the first four verses:

O sing unto my roundelay;
O drop the briny tear with me;
Dance no more on holiday,
Like a running river be;
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Black his hair as the winter night,
White his neck as the summer snow,

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"JOHN GILPIN," BY T. STOTHARD, R.A.

"He carries weight! he rides a race!"

Photo: Rischgitz Collection. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Bristol.*

CHATTERTON, BY MRS. E. M. WARD

The "wonder boy" poet of the eighteenth century.

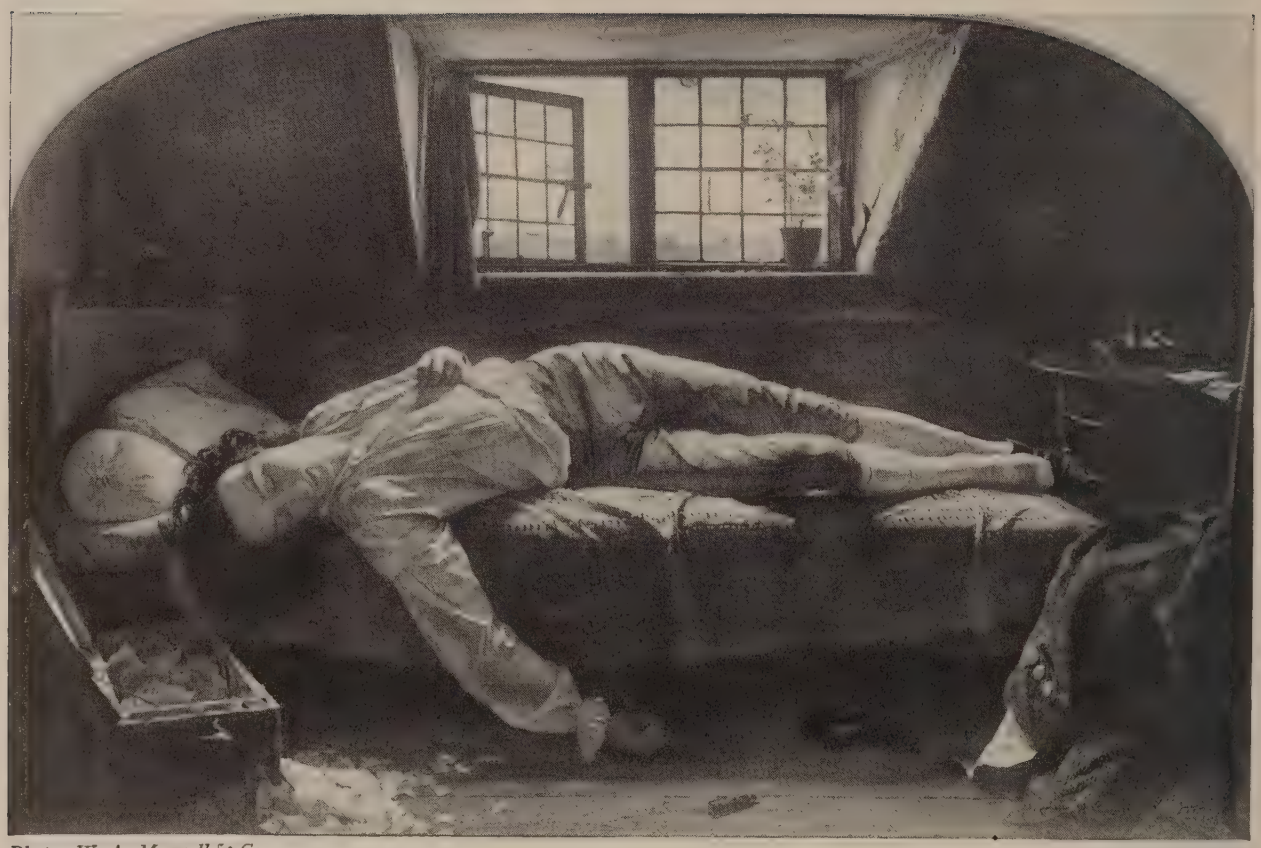

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"THE DEATH OF CHATTERTON," BY H. WALLIS.

Tate Gallery, London.

The scene of the tragedy was the house of a Mrs. Angel, a sack-maker, in Brook Street, Holborn.

Red his face as the morning light,
Cold he lies in the grave below;
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick in dance as thought can be;
Deft his tabor, cudgel stout;
Oh! he lies by the willow-tree.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Hark! the raven flaps his wing,
In the briered dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing,
To the nightmares as they go.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

In the spring of 1770 Chatterton came to London, where, for some months, he contrived to support himself by hack journalism, writing political tirades in the manner of Junius. Payment was bad indeed in the Grub Street of the eighteenth century: Chatterton received only a shilling for each of his articles and less than eighteen pence for his poems. Desperate and disappointed, too proud to accept charity or to go back home, Chatterton poisoned himself with arsenic on August 24, 1770, in his garret in Brook Street, Holborn. He was then seventeen years and nine months old.

Chatterton was buried in the grounds attached to the Shoe Lane workhouse in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn. His actual achievements may be of small value, but of his genius there can be no question, and one can only guess what he might have become had the circumstances of his life been happier.

§ 2

THOMAS GRAY

Gray was born in 1716, his mother being a milliner of Cornhill, who had, however, sufficient means to send the boy to Eton, and afterwards to Cambridge, where he became professor of Modern History. Gray was a first-rate scholar, and indeed, there is something of the classic stamp on all his work. He wrote so little, and in the phrase of Horace, he used the file with such untiring patience, that it has been said of him that no man ever entered the company of the poets with so small a volume in his hand. Indeed, if we may take the public verdict, that volume might as well contain a single poem, and no more: "The Elegy written in a Country Churchyard"; while, if we choose to follow Doctor Johnson, even this tiny bulk must be diminished. "Sir," said the Doctor, "there are but two good stanzas in Gray's poetry, which are in his 'Elegy.' " He then repeated the stanza.

> For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
> This pleasing anxious being ere resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

He added, "The other stanza I forget."

Which was the forgotten stanza? Surely it was either

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air;

or perhaps

> Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
> Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
> Along the cool sequestered vale of life
> They kept the even tenor of their way.

Everybody knows how Wolfe recited the "Elegy" before the battle of Quebec and how he declared that he would rather be the author of the poem than the conqueror of the city. And the truth is that, overwrought and artificial as a large proportion of Gray's poetry appears to us to-day, we are still prepared to go a great deal further than the Doctor. To take but two examples, which may serve as types of many, "The Bard" contains those splendid lines:

> Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
> Confusion on thy banners wait;
> Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing,
> They mock the air with idle state.

And passages of equal splendour can be found further on in the same poem, such as the well-known stanza:

> Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
> While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
> In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
> Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm.

Nor is it quite the truth to say that all his lines are filed and chiselled, works of art and not of nature. Where can be found a touch of melody more spontaneous, sweet, and sensitive than such lines as these:

> There pipes the woodlark and the song-thrush there
> Scatters his loose notes on the waste of air.

If we can hardly say that in Gray's book of verses are "infinite riches in a little room," yet it is not without its diamonds of fine water and its pearls of lasting price.

Both Thomas Gray and William Collins, who was born in Chichester in 1721, were rebels against the dead, trim artificialities that characterise the minor English poets who were influenced by Pope. Collins is best remembered as the author of the

"Ode to Evening," and of an ode written to the soldiers who were killed at Fontenay and Culloden:

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

§ 3

JAMES THOMSON

James Thomson's "The Seasons" is not among the poems that are for all time, but Thomson has an interesting place in literary history. He lived in an artificial age, and he revolted, though not very successfully, against the stucco artificiality of which Horace Walpole was the great protagonist. Thomson wrote "The Seasons" in blank verse, reverting back to the manner of Milton—with, of course, none of his genius—and this verse is a relief to the fashionable eighteenth-century rhymed couplets. Thomson knew the country and loved it. His love never found the dainty expression that has given Herrick immortality. But it was real, and despite the occasional and probably inevitable lapses into the artificial he certainly heard "strains of the fairy world and the fairy songs." In a sense he was the forerunner of Scott and Wordsworth, though Wordsworth sneered at his "false and sentimental commonplaces."

"The Castle of Indolence," which took him fifteen years to write, is perhaps the most highly finished and poetical of his

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

THOMAS GRAY, THE AUTHOR OF THE "ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD," BY J. G. ECCARDT

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Painted in 1747 for Horace Walpole.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE SUMMER-HOUSE IN THE GARDEN ADJOINING COWPER'S HOUSE AT OLNEY

Here the poet wrote "The Task" and "John Gilpin."

works. The following extract will give a good idea of its style, which has much in it of Spenser's charm and sweetness:

> A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> Forever flushing round a summer sky:
> There eke the soft delights that witchingly
> Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
> But whate'er smack'd of noyance or unrest
> Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Thomson was a Scot. He was born in Roxburghshire in 1700, and was educated at Edinburgh University. He was intended for the Church, but after the death of his father, in an attempt to lay a ghost in a haunted house, he came to London to seek his fortune as a poet. "Winter," the first part of "The Seasons," was published in 1726, and the poem was completed four years later. Thomson wrote other poems and several dramas, all of which are forgotten. Thanks to the good offices of the Prince of Wales, he was given the sinecure office of Surveyor-General of the Leeward Islands, with a salary of £300 a year, and this with his earnings as a poet enabled him to live a pleasant, modest, and rather lazy life in his house at Kew Lane, where his cellar was well stocked with Scotch ale:

> The world forsaking with a calm disdain,
> Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
> Here quaffed encircled with the joyous train,
> Oft moralising sage: his ditty sweet.
> He loathed much to write, nor cared to repeat.

In "The Seasons" Thomson's thought, as Coleridge said, is natural—and that was a great thing in the eighteenth century—even when his style is verbose and tiresome. The following description of a summer morning is Thomson at his best:

With quickened step,
Brown Night retires: young Day pours in apace,
And opens all the lawny prospect wide.
The dripping rock, the mountain's misty top,
Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.
Blue, through the dusk, the smoking currents shine;
And from the bladed field the fearful hare
Limps, awkward: while along the forest-glade
The wild deer trip, and, often turning, gaze
At early passenger. Music awakes
The native voice of undissembled joy;
And thick around the woodland hymns arise.
Roused by the cock, the soon clad shepherd leaves
His mossy cottage, where with Peace he dwells;
And from the crowded fold, in order, drives
His flock, to taste the verdure of the morn.

He died in 1748.

§ 4

WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper, who was born in 1731, has been aptly described as a link between Thomson and Wordsworth—that is, he threw off the last traces of Pope's artifice of style and the view of nature as a trim parterre. He lived the quietest of country lives; he loved children, cats, hares, and flowers; but, if he shared Wordsworth's passion for the lakes, the mountains, and the starry heavens, it was rather for their external beauty than for the mysterious life of things, the spirit that may be felt but not seen, which Wordsworth, in a still communion, drank into his soul. Yet many of Cowper's best-known lines have a certain grandeur in simplicity which has kept them sweet and living. Such is the splendid hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," and the dirge on the loss of the *Royal George:*

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Toll for the brave!
  Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
  His work of glory done.

Weigh the vessel up,
  Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup
  The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
  And she may float again,
Full charged with England's thunder,
  And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
  His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
  Shall plough the wave no more.

Nor can the lines on his Mother's Portrait be easily surpassed. Many of the passages, so sweet and sad and simple, are such as, having once been read, can never be forgotten.

Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me; . . .
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu! . . .

Cowper suffered from hysteria, and was for a while shut up in a private asylum. After his recovery, religion became an obsession with him and coloured the rest of his life, sometimes obviously affording him comfort, and at other times filling him with hopeless despair.

But it must not be forgotten that, although one of the most

melancholy of poets, Cowper had his lighter hours. We need only call to mind "John Gilpin," and his letters to Mrs. Unwin, so full of gayest wit.

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There are volumes in the "English Men of Letters" Series on the following: Goldsmith, Cowper, Crabbe, Gray, and Thomson.

Excellent editions of the works of the following poets are in the "Oxford Standard Authors" and the "Oxford Poets": William Cowper, George Crabbe, Thomas Gray and William Collins (1 vol.), and James Thomson.

XX

DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE

DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE

§ 1

IT is curious rather than obvious that we should at this day refer so naturally to the mid-eighteenth century period of our literature as the Age of Johnson. For Dr. Johnson cannot, except in a special sense, or without explanation be called the greatest English literary man of his time. He had none of Burke's splendour of genius, none of Goldsmith's excellent lightness of touch and "legal tender" of humour; he was inferior to Gibbon in learning and staying-power; Sheridan's rapier wit and easy invention were quite beyond him; his poetry cannot be compared with Gray's, nor was his prose half so English and transparent as Wesley's. Yet such were his personality and influence that we involuntarily give his name to this period.

Samuel Johnson was born on September 18, 1709, at Lichfield. He was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller of that small cathedral city. He was trained under his father to be himself a bookseller, and he could bind a book with his own hands. Probably he never attempted such a thing after he left Lichfield. In after life he preferred the risk of chemical experiments, and did not consider too narrowly whether the risk was his own or other people's. But later in his life, when visiting Lichfield, he called at the bookshop of Mr. Major Morgan, who had in some degree succeeded to old Michael Johnson's business. Taking up one of the books, he "recollected the binding to be the work of his own hands." Otherwise, Johnson was of little service to his

father: he read books instead of selling them, and confessed afterwards that "to supersede the pleasures of reading by the attentions of traffic was a task he could never master."

"A Vile Melancholy"

He inherited a taint of scrofula, and in early childhood was taken to London by his mother to be touched by Queen Anne for "the king's evil." He inherited also, from his father, what he called "a vile melancholy." He began his book-learning at a dame school in Lichfield, continued it at Lichfield School, where he was taught Latin, and then at Stourbridge he spent a year as half schoolboy, half usher, miserably enough. After two years of idleness—which meant desultory reading in his father's shop—he was entered as a Commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, the expense being defrayed by friends of his father. In his Oxford years he was afflicted, as few young men have ever been, by "an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience," a malady which he was never to outgrow. In 1731 he returned to Lichfield to see his father die and to face the world on his own account with unsettled aims and the sum of twenty pounds.

He began his adult career as a sort of miscellaneous journalist in Birmingham, writing for a local paper, and translating Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* for a bookseller, thus absorbing the background of his allegorical tale *Rasselas.* On slender means and with a future that was all vague he married, at the age of twenty-six, a widow, Elizabeth Porter, who was twenty years his senior and was possessed of £1,000. They set up a small country school. But in 1737 Johnson started for London to lead the literary life as it could then be lived.

His first employer in London was Edward Cave, the proprietor of the then young but well-established *Gentleman's Magazine.* His principal task was to report by hearsay, or from his own imagination, the principal speeches in the Parliamentary

Debates. We hear of no raptures in his contemplation of London. On the contrary, he lost little time in writing and publishing his satire, "London," imitated from Juvenal, in which, with more than a little pose, he lashed the vices and social conditions of the town—which he was to live in and love for the rest of his days—even to the point of exclaiming:

> Who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,
> Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?

He received £10 for the poem and, what was more valuable in the end, the praise of Pope. His career had begun.

Odds and ends of "Grub Street" work occupied his next years apart from his contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Miscellaneous essays and translations followed each other. But in 1744 he wrote, "at a white heat," his Life of Richard Savage, the wastrel poet, who had been his earliest companion in London. This will be referred to later. It did much to establish his reputation in 1744. In 1749 appeared his fine poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes." He was no longer unknown or in extreme poverty. Moreover, he was about to embark, at the suggestion of Robert Dodsley, the bookseller, on the greatest work of his life. This was his *Dictionary of the English Language,* to which we had best come at once.

Johnson's Dictionary

After occupying a succession of lodgings in and about London, Johnson and his wife had settled in the house, No. 17 Gough Square, Fleet Street, which is now his London "shrine" and the home of the Johnson Club. Here he took off his coat, so to speak, to his great task.

Johnson did not, of course, work single-handed. He employed no fewer than six amanuenses in the long top front garret of his house. In this garret the meetings of the Johnson Club are now held. His assistants were the two Macbeans; Mr. Shiels,

who afterwards helped with the *Lives of the Poets;* Mr. Stewart, a son of an Edinburgh bookseller; a Mr. Maitland; and a Mr. Peyton. Johnson's payments of twenty-three shillings a week to each of these assistants reduced his agreed remuneration of £1,575 to an inconsiderable residue, and the work made the heaviest demands on his time and strength. Dr. Birkbeck Hill thinks that he had in view his own experience of big literary undertakings when, referring to Pope's slow progress in translating the "Iliad," he wrote: "Indolence, interruption, business, and pleasure all take their turns of retardation; and every long work is lengthened by a thousand causes that can, and ten thousand that cannot, be recounted."

But the work went on. Johnson began as the makers of our own *New English Dictionary* began—by collecting quotations. Against each, in the margin, he wrote the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. His clerks transcribed all these sentences on separate slips. With these in hand he dictated his definitions, and supplied the etymologies from whatever sources were available. He had hoped to be done in three years. But the three years became seven, and we have the well-known story of Andrew Millar, the actual publisher, saying, when he received the last sheet, "Thank God, I have done with him," and Johnson's smiling comment, "I am glad that he thanks God for anything."

A fairly long list could be made of words to which, in sport or petulance, Johnson attached indefensible meanings. But some of the humours of the Dictionary were not of this class, being unconscious. Thus he defined "pastern" as "the knee of a horse." Asked by a lady how he came to do this, he replied with admirable frankness, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." Similar frankness, on another occasion, was more injurious to his interviewer. Soon after the Dictionary appeared Garrick, being asked by Johnson what people said of it, replied that among other things it was objected that he had quoted authors whose

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR J. REYNOLDS

National Gallery, London.

This portrait was painted for Johnson's wealthy friend, Henry Thrale, the brewer, who paid Sir Joshua thirty-five guineas.

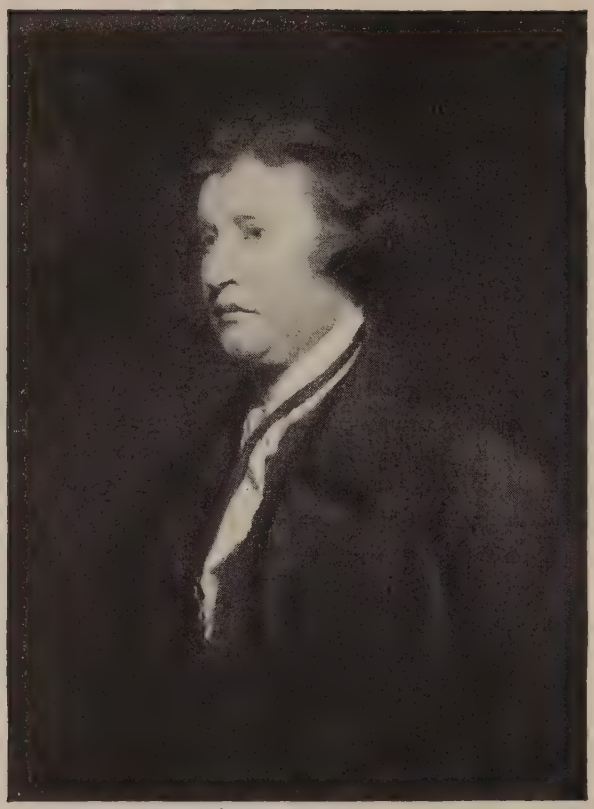

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

EDMUND BURKE, M.P., BY REYNOLDS

Statesman, Orator, and Writer.

Both Burke and Reynolds were members of the famous club of which Johnson was the chief figure.

DR. JOHNSON'S HOUSE IN GOUGH SQUARE, FLEET STREET

It was here that Johnson compiled his Dictionary, and wrote *Rasselas*.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DR. JOHNSON'S GREAT ARM-CHAIR

Preserved in the house of his father, Michael Johnson at Lichfield, now a museum of Johnson relics.

style was beneath the dignity of such a work, as, for instance, Samuel Richardson. "Nay," said Johnson, "I have done worse than that; I have cited thee, David."

The work appeared on April 15, 1755, in two folio volumes, at the price of £4 10*s.*, and was received with wonder and acclamation. "I may surely," he wrote, "be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave." But there was some morbid exaggeration here.

"The Rambler"

The Dictionary did not absorb all Johnson's energies between 1748 and 1755. On March 20, 1750, the first essay of his *Rambler* appeared. Following the model of Addison's *Spectator,* Johnson came forth, says Boswell, as "a majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom." It is worth noting that just as the *Spectator* and *Tatler* had been largely inspired by the talk of the Queen Anne coffee-houses, Johnson's essays reflected in some measure the conversations he enjoyed in the Club he had founded in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. During just two years Johnson wrote two essays a week for publication on Tuesdays and Fridays. He invariably supplied his copy at the last moment, and he rarely read a proof; but he revised all the essays carefully for the collected edition. The success of the production was not great. As author Johnson received four guineas a week, which worked out at a guinea per thousand words; and the sales, at twopence, did not reach five hundred copies a day. But there were compensations. Mrs. Johnson said to him: "I thought very well of you before, but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this." Nor was self-approval wanting: Johnson said to a friend, "My other works are wine and water, but my *Rambler* is pure wine."

Of the 208 *Rambler* essays Johnson wrote all but four or

five. A general idea of their subject-matter may be conveyed by giving a few typical titles. Such are:

Folly of Anger: Misery of a Peevish Old Age.
Various Arts of Self-Delusion.
Advantages of Mediocrity: An Eastern Fable.
Reasons Why Advice is Generally Ineffectual.
A Proper Audience Necessary to a Wit.
A Critical Examination of "Samson Agonistes."
Cruelty of Parental Tyranny.
Directions to Authors Attacked by Critics.
History of a Legacy-Hunter.
Effect of Sudden Riches upon the Manners.

Titles of essays, however, convey little; treatment is all. Johnson's style as an essayist was as heavy-handed and turgid as Steele's or Addison's was light, limpid, and resourceful. Indeed, he criticised his work in a phrase when, says Boswell, "having read over one of his Ramblers, Mr. Langton asked him how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, 'too wordy.'" The same verdict may be passed on his later *Idler* essays, though in these a livelier fancy and an easier style are sometimes visible.

Mr. Augustine Birrell has compared the march of Johnson's sentences to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. His style is well suited to the expression of large verdicts and sombre reflections. Take this declaration of Shakespeare's permanence:

> The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury the adamant of Shakespeare.

Or the famous passage in his last *Idler* essay:

> There are few things, not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, this is the last. Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the Idler, with all his chilliness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is before him.
>
> The secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done anything for the last time we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted to us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining.

"Rasselas"

Johnson's last year in Gough Square was clouded by the death of his mother, at the age of ninety. In the *Idler* (No. 41) he referred to this event in those words of sombre beauty: "The last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects." To relieve his heart, and to pay his mother's funeral expenses, he sat down and wrote his allegorical story on the theme "Vanitas vanitatum," *Rasselas,* in the evenings of a single week in the spring of 1759. He received £75 for it, and £25 for its second edition. It is constantly stated that *Rasselas* was written in Johnson's next residence, in Staple Inn, Holborn, but an examination of relevant dates in Boswell's *Life* shows that this is impossible. It is certain that *Rasselas* was written in Gough Square. There from night to night, the princely wanderers from the happy valley in Abyssinia travelled on in their vain search for greater

happiness; there Imlac grew eloquent and Pekuah timid, the Pyramids were measured, and the Astronomer rescued from the mists of his distraught imagination; and there Johnson penned that quiet "Conclusion, in which nothing is concluded," save only that "they deliberated a while what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abissinia." *Rasselas* gives us the moralisations of the *Rambler* and the *Idler* thinly connected by a story. It is now the most widely read of Johnson's prose writings, while it has a close affinity, in mood and motive, to the best of his poems, written ten years earlier, "The Vanity of Human Wishes." A low thunder of melancholy reflection on the transitoriness of human glory and the ironies of fate is heard in every line of this poem. A famous passage is that in which Johnson refers to the hard lot of the writer and the scholar:

> Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
> Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee:
> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause a while from learning, to be wise;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
> See nations, slowly wise, and meanly just,
> To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
> In dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
> Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

Equally memorable is the passage in which he draws conclusions from the fate of Charles of Sweden, sunk from splendour into exile:

> His fall was destined to a barren strand,
> A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
> He left the name at which the world grows pale,
> To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Another literary labour begun by Johnson in Gough Square was his annotated edition of Shakespeare. He had projected it

From a photograph by W. A. Mansell & Co.

"DR. JOHNSON AT THE MITRE," BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Tate Gallery, London.

This very curious and interesting picture—unique among Rossetti's paintings—illustrates the following passage in Boswell's "Life of Johnson." Dr. Maxwell told the story of how:

"Two young women from Staffordshire visited him when I was present, to consult him on the subject of Methodism, to which they were inclined. 'Come' (said he), 'you pretty fools, dine with Maxwell and me at the Mitre, and we will talk over that subject.'"

Although Johnson's male companion was Maxwell, Rossetti substituted the much more familiar Boswell.

as early as 1744. It was not until 1756, when the Dictionary was off his hands, that he began his task, which continued to be a comedy of delay. He announced, so to speak, with tucked wristbands, that the edition would be ready by the Christmas of the following year. Subscriptions flowed in. He finished it in just nine years! His industry had to be stoked with guineas, and the stoking was perhaps done by his publisher with too little science.

"The Lives of the Poets"

In 1777, in his last Fleet Street house, in Bolt Court, Johnson began his fine series of critical biographies, the *Lives of the Poets,* written originally to be prefaces to an edition of the English poets published by a group of booksellers in 1779-81. The *Lives* is his best and most enduring work. It exhibits at once the narrowness of his conceptions of poetry and literature, and the force and acuteness of his understanding within its range of interests. He had little feeling for any poetry but that of his own period. But against this fact may be set Mr. Augustine Birrell's remarks: "Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as when he has got Milton or Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite life is that of Sir Richard Blackmore. The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakespeare, Milton, and Gray."

The longest of the *Lives* is the best from the biographical standpoint, that of his early friend Savage, who has already been mentioned; and the best critical essays are those of Dryden, Pope, and Cowley. With all their faults the *Lives* abound in passages of acute discernment and vigorous common sense. The biographical parts of the work gave Johnson a great deal of trouble in the collection of facts. His information was drawn from many and varied quarters, "from books, and partly

from sources which had long been closed; from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults." Happily he simplified his style in sympathy with his subjects.

Johnson's Talk

If so many moderating judgments have to be passed on Johnson's writings it may fairly be asked, How came his vast ascendancy in the literary world of his age, and why do his name and fame persist as they do? For it can be said, without much risk of dispute, that the three names in our literature which, above all others, have "got through" to the simplest and least literate minds in this country are those of Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, and Charles Dickens. It may even be ventured that Dr. Johnson's name, brought into an argument in a village inn or a London cabmen's shelter, is accepted more readily than Shakespeare's. This lasting potency rests firstly on Johnson's Dictionary. For although this was not by any means the first English work of its kind, it counts as the first in the popular mind and, in a sense, it counts also as the last. To ask or doubt the meaning of a word is still, by tradition, to invite an appeal to Dr. Johnson, and since the need to define words and terms is ever recurrent, the lexicographer's name is for ever enmeshed in the inquiry. Secondly, the prowess of Johnson in talk and argument has appealed to the common mind. A fist heavily brought down on a tavern table with the name of Dr. Johnson uttered will still carry weight and secure a pause in the argument. This is the very spell which the Doctor exercised over his friends, acquaintances, and distant admirers in his lifetime. To his talk, far more than to his writings, he owed the title of literary dictator, given to him by Chesterfield, and that of the Great Cham of Literature first bestowed on him, probably, by Tobias Smollett. Bacon said: "Reading maketh a full man; conference, a

ready man; and writing, an exact man." Johnson read deeply, conferred much, and wrote in varying degrees of industry. Yet with all this equipment he might not have been the genius he was in conversation. He might never have been able to impress men and women by his talk as he did in the remotest districts of Scotland, where they fell prostrate under his spell. "He is a dungeon of wit," said Lady Lochbuy. "It is music to hear this man speak," was the verdict of Ulinish when Johnson had explained —the entire process of tanning!

The chief ingredients of his talk were wit, sense, and information; his secret was that he had these in overwhelming abundance and was never at a loss. Often wrong, he was never weak. If he had not been often and impressively in the right he could not have become the literary dictator of his age. He talked for victory. He did not discourse lonesomely and at large, like Coleridge. He talked because he was talked to, and his aim was to set right what he thought had been said amiss: one foe crushed, one fallacy exposed, he was ready for the next. "May there not," pleaded Boswell with him one day, "may there not, sir, be very good conversation without a contest for superiority?" Johnson replied, "No *animated* conversation, sir." Nothing but animated talk served him. Boswell once found him highly satisfied with his prowess on the preceding evening. "Well, we had a good talk." "Yes, sir," said Boswell, "you *tossed and gored* several persons."

As Mr. Birrell says, "They came to be tossed and gored. And, after all, are they much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause."

One's sympathies, indeed, are with old Moser, the Swiss Keeper of the Royal Academy, who so annoyed Goldsmith by exclaiming, "Stay! Stay! Toctor Shonson is going to zay zomething." The interrupter is still laughed at, yet his behaviour crystallises Johnson's extraordinary ascendancy in conversation. Men did listen to him like that.

§ 2

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

It is time, indeed, to bring Oliver Goldsmith on the scene. He was Johnson's junior by nineteen years, and we have no precise record of their first meeting. No two men of the eighteenth century have been so familiarised to us by biographers. Goldsmith was the son of a poor Irish vicar, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, and was born in his father's vicarage at Pallas in the county of Longford. Two years after his birth the family removed to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath, where the vicar had obtained a more lucrative living. It is practically certain that the homely everyday sights and some of the personalities of Lissoy were haunting him when, in 1770, he wrote his finest poem, "The Deserted Village." Its first lines are full of wistful memory:

> Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
> Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain;
> Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
> And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,
> Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
> Seats of my youth, where every sport could please;
> How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
> Where humble happiness endeared each scene!

The portrait of the old village parson includes a very beautiful simile.

> To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
> But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
> As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

But the most tender lines of all are those in which the storm-tossed man of letters in London tells of his unfulfilled dream of

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DR. OLIVER GOLDSMITH, BY REYNOLDS

The portrait is in the possession of Earl Sackville. An excellent engraving in mezzotint was made by Giuseppe Marchi.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"A LITERARY PARTY AT SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS," BY JAMES E. DOYLE

Reading from left to right: Jas. Boswell, Dr. Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Pascal Paoli, Chas. Burney, Walton and Oliver Goldsmith.

Sir Joshua Reynolds's house, in which the party met, is still to be seen on the west side of Leicester Square.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JAMES BOSWELL, BY SIR J. REYNOLDS

National Gallery, London.

This portrait was painted by Sir Joshua in 1785, at Boswell's earnest request and on the condition that he (Boswell) would pay for it when he had received his first fees as a barrister in Westminster Hall.

INTERIOR OF "YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE," FLEET STREET

Although the famous Cheshire Cheese tavern in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, is not mentioned by Boswell or in any contemporary account of Johnson, there is an old and strong tradition that it was one of Johnson's haunts; it is certainly in the condition in which he would have known it. Dr. Johnson's seat is seen in the right-hand corner, where it is marked by a brass tablet.

ending his life amid the scenes in which it had begun. And here again is another beautiful simile.

> In all my wanderings round this world of care
> In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
> I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
> Amid these humble bowers to lay me down,
> To husband out life's taper at the close,
> And keep the flame from wasting, by repose.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
> Pants to the place from which at first she flew,
> I still had hopes my long vexations past,
> Here to return—and die at home at last.

"The Traveller"

In 1745 Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a poor sizar, exposed to many humiliations. To earn a little money he wrote street ballads, for which he obtained five shillings each. In 1747 he gained an exhibition, and to celebrate his success invited friends of both sexes to a dance in his rooms, which was violently interrupted by his outraged tutor. His college career remained stormy and unhappy, but he took his B.A. degree in 1749. Two years were spent by him at his mother's cottage at Ballymahon. Then he meditated emigration to America, but thought better of it, and in 1757 he went to Edinburgh to study medicine, helped by funds supplied by his Uncle Contarine. His restless spirit drove him abroad in 1754, and during two years he was lost in mysterious wanderings which took him to Paris, Strasburg, Padua, Switzerland, and various parts of France, thus storing the impressions and sentiments which ten years later were to establish his fame as a poet on the publication of "The Traveller." He sent the first sketch of it home to his brother Henry, to whom he wrote the exquisite lines:

> Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
> And round his dwelling guardian saints attend;

Bless'd be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire;
Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair;
Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

From all this wandering and reflecting—so mysteriously financed—Goldsmith returned to England, without invitation or engagement, and, practically, without a penny in his pocket. He landed at Dover on February 1, 1756, with a medical degree of which he never gave a clear account, and which was never authenticated. Not long afterwards he became an usher in a school kept by one Dr. Milner, at Peckham. That is why there is a "Goldsmith Road" in Peckham to-day. Through the Milners, however, he was introduced to Griffiths, the "bookseller" (i.e. eighteenth-century publisher) and thus to the literary world.

"The Citizen of the World"

In 1757 he became Griffiths's tame author, living in a house in Paternoster Row, on a salary from Griffiths, and under the thumb of Mrs. Griffiths, who revised all he wrote. It was a bad time for friendless authors. As John Forster says, "the patron was gone, and the public had not come." Griffiths owned and published the *Monthly Review,* and Goldsmith did "hack" reviews for it. In the year mentioned he wrote that he was making shift to live by "a very little practice as a physician and a very little reputation as a poet." His first definite success was not his laborious and now unread *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (which, however, cannot be neglected by literary annalists), but his admirably humorous and

pungent "Chinese Letters" written for John Newbery's *Public Ledger* in 1760, and afterwards published in volume as *The Citizen of the World.* Following a literary vogue of the time he identified himself with a Chinese savant, visiting London and sending to a Pekin friend a series of letters containing his impressions of London and English life generally. This was a mere pose, and in reality Goldsmith wrote *The Citizen* in his own character, and in it expressed, or insinuated, his own opinions. *The Citizen of the World* can, with judicious skipping, be read to-day with delight, particularly for its delineation of such characters as Beau Tibbs and the "Man in Black."

"The Vicar of Wakefield"

Goldsmith's way of life had hitherto been that of the hack-writer in the garret; but now fortune began to smile on him sufficiently to warrant a change of residence. No longer a starveling garreteer, he is discovered in decent lodgings in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. Dr. Johnson, who had certainly met him before, becomes his visitor and closer friend. And here on a memorable evening Goldsmith entertains him and Mr., afterwards Bishop, Percy. The Doctor came to Goldsmith's dressed more neatly and respectably than he was wont to be seen, and, on Percy remarking the change, said, "Why, sir, I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." Thus was inaugurated one of the finest friendships in literary history. It was cemented in 1764, when Johnson rescued his friend from the hands of bailiffs and the threat of prison. What happened was told by Johnson himself to Boswell:

> I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to

him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.

It was Goldsmith's employer, John Newbery, of St. Paul's Churchyard, who bought the *Vicar*. But he did so only on Johnson's advice, and kept the manuscript two years before he published it.

In the details of its plot, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is not a great novel. Goldsmith wrote in his "Advertisement" to the book," "There are a hundred faults in this Thing," and this is true. The beauty of the book lies in its incidental comedy, and in its exquisite touches of simple human nature. It touched the hearts of English, German, and French readers equally. The sophisticated Goethe loved it as a statement of those things which "redeem men from all the errors of life."

Goldsmith's genius for light and natural comedy is equally shown in his plays, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. The scene, in the latter, in which the squire drills his men-servants in proper behaviour before they wait on his guests at dinner, is one of the best in British comedy.

In the last five or six years of his life Goldsmith was not poor, though neither was he rich. He was a greatly loved member of the famous Literary Club founded by Johnson. He died in his Temple chambers in Buck Court on April 9, 1774. When the

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH, AND BOSWELL AT THE MITRE TAVERN," BY EYRE CROWE, A.R.A.

The Mitre Tavern, Johnson's favourite resort, no longer exists. It was on the south side of Fleet Street, nearly on the site of Hoare's Bank.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"DR. JOHNSON RESCUING GOLDSMITH FROM HIS LANDLADY"

After E. M. Ward, R. A.

It is not quite certain whether the scene of this famous interview was in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, or in Islington.

news came to Sir Joshua Reynolds he put aside his brush for the day. Edmund Burke burst into tears. To-day Goldsmith's gravestone in the Temple, which marks only approximately the place of his burial, is visited by lovers of his character and genius.

§ 3

EDMUND BURKE

Intellectually Burke was the greatest man in the Johnson Circle. He is vividly figured for us by Boswell and others. Edmund Burke was essentially a political thinker who used literature to embellish his speeches and writings. His early work, the *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* is now little read, but Lord Morley points out its enduring merit: "It was a vigorous enlargement of the principle, which Addison had not long before timidly illustrated, that critics of art seek its principles in the wrong place, so long as they limit their search to poems, pictures, engravings, statues, and buildings, instead of first arranging the sentiments and faculties in man to which art makes its appeal."

Lord Morley, too, affirms that three of Burke's publications, the *Speech on American Taxation,* the *Speech on Conciliation with America,* and the *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol,* form "the most perfect manual in our literature, or in any literature, for one who approaches the study of public affairs."

Great Thoughts in Great Prose

Burke's writings stretch the reader's mind, as his talk stretched Johnson's. His prose is one of the richest literary fabrics in the language, abounding in brilliant analysis and noble imagery. "It was Burke's peculiarity and his glory," says Mr. Birrell, "to apply the imagination of a poet of the first order to the facts and the business of life. Arnold says of Sophocles, 'He saw life steadily, and saw it **whole.**' Substitute for the word 'life' the words 'organised society,' and you get a peep into

Burke's mind. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. . . . Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order—a lover of settled ways, of justice, peace, and security. His writings are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain." The work in which these qualities of Burke can be most profitably and enjoyably studied by the general reader is of course his *Reflections on the French Revolution,* that great plea for order and continuity in human government, and for justice and sympathy between nations and citizens. The following vision of Marie Antoinette illustrates the splendours of prose to which Burke rose with ease.

> It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart,

> which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

Many other members of what may be called the Johnson Circle—Samuel Richardson, Sheridan, Gibbon, and others—are dealt with in other and more appropriate chapters. It should be remembered Johnson linked himself to the history of English fiction not only by his admiration of Richardson, who, he said, "enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue," but by his later fatherly encouragement of Fanny Burney (afterwards Madame d'Arblay), the first really notable English woman novelist. Her *Evelina,* published in 1778, was an instant success. Dr. Johnson declared that passages in it were worthy of Richardson; and Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, and Sheridan swelled the applause. Fanny Burney never quite repeated this success, though her novel, *Cecilia* (1782), can be read to-day with delight. Professor Saintsbury thus characterises her four novels: "*Evelina,* delectable; *Cecilia,* admirable; *Camilla,* estimable; *The Wanderer,* impossible." Her *Diary and Letters* are wonderfully vivacious records of the Court of George III, and of the literary society which she enjoyed. They form a great contribution to our knowledge of her period, which extended to the first three years of the Victorian age.

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XXI

EDWARD GIBBON AND OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE-WRITERS

EDWARD GIBBON AND OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE-WRITERS

§ 1

GIBBON

IT does not come within our province to trace here the development of historical writings. Such writing came early into existence and has continued through the ages. For English readers, four historians are of greater importance than all others—Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude, and we might add John Richard Green.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the first remarkable development in the writing of history in England showed itself. David Hume was both philosopher and historian, but neither his philosophy nor his history can be dealt with in this "OUTLINE OF LITERATURE." Taking all things into account, many of us would be prepared to agree with Mr. Frederic Harrison that Gibbon is the supreme historian of all lands and ages. Yet that would not prevent our also concurring with Lord Acton that Macaulay is the greatest of all writers of History. Nor would this verdict preclude us from asserting that, for sheer beauty and ease of style, Froude remains unequalled. Finally, we would gladly acknowledge that in historical intuition, and in the power of delineating character by a phrase, no man since Tacitus has ever rivalled Thomas Carlyle. It should be added that some readers still rank Herodotus and Thucydides above any of these.

Early Years of Gibbon

Edward Gibbon was born in 1737 at Putney. His school and college career gave little promise of the eminence to which he was to attain. After a few years profitably employed in acquiring a grounding in the classical languages at Westminster School, he proceeded, at the then not unusual age of fifteen, to Magdalen College, Oxford. There he spent what he, himself in his interesting *Autobiography,* calls "fourteen unprofitable months." It was the dark age of the old Universities; and Gibbon seems to have received not the slightest assistance or encouragement in his studies from the tutors of the place. But he read voraciously. Soon he gave up his Anglican creed, and after remaining for some time undecided between Mohammed and the Pope, eventually made his choice in favour of the Roman Church. These religious vagaries of his youthful son so alarmed the elder Gibbon that he decided to break short his University career, and to send him into exile at the home of an amiable and cultured Swiss pastor at Lausanne.

This proved to be the turning-point in the historian's life; for during some of the most formative years he was thrown among French influences, just when those influences were most powerful. It was the age of the Encyclopædia, of Diderot, Condorcet, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Of these two last Rousseau had been born at Geneva; and the rugged peaks at which Gibbon gazed across the lake looked down upon the waters of Annecy, where his romantic genius began to unfold itself. Voltaire had retired to his castle at Ferney, within easy distance of Lausanne. From these facts two things resulted—Gibbon was converted from Catholicism, not to Anglicanism, but to scepticism, and he became really more French than English.

While at Lausanne, for the only time in his life, he fell in love. The object of his affections was a Swiss girl called Susanne Curchod. But the Fates were not propitious. His father was

"THE CHARIOT RACE." BY PROFESSOR ALEXANDER WAGNER

a successful charioteer was richly rewarded for his services.

often devoted their lives and fortunes in support of their favourite colours, a reckless

again alarmed, and sent stringent injunctions to his son to abandon the courtship.

We should, perhaps, think more highly of Gibbon had he persisted; but he did not. To quote his own words, he "sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son." Susanne, some time later, became the wife of Necker—the able financier who strove to save France from bankruptcy in 1789—and the mother of the famous Madame de Staël.

§ 2

The Great History

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire is probably the greatest history of all time. It was as he sat among the ruins of the Capitol in 1765, watching the sun going down over the Eternal City, that Gibbon conceived the colossal and magnificent scheme of narrating the history of the decay of the power of Rome, beginning with the great age of the Antonines, and ending with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Fourteen centuries were comprised in the vast panorama, among them some of the most vital epochs in the history of the world. He had to deal in turn with the decline of the Roman state, the rise and triumph of Christianity, the founding of the Byzantine Empire, the victories of Mohammedanism, the religious and political differences and cleavages of the Middle Ages, the rise of national states in the West, and the great duel between the Empire and the encroaching Turks in the East. Here was labour for a veritable Hercules—to examine and digest all the extant authorities; afterwards to select the material from the immaterial; then finally to tell the whole long story, making each personage and every fact fall into its proper place so as to give unity and perspective to the whole. This most difficult task Gibbon triumphantly accomplished. Scholarship has made immense strides since his day, yet it is surprising how seldom he is caught in any

serious error. The literary effect is superb. The work rises before us like a majestic Greek temple, firmly built upon a rock, strong, symmetrical, and beautiful.

The elements which went to make the *Decline and Fall* what it is, as Mr. Augustine Birrell has said, are "the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction, and the daily toil." In the same essay Mr. Birrell says: "To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. It is now well on its second century. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered and with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen born and die. Its shortcomings have been pointed out—it is well; its inequalities exposed—that is fair; its style criticised—that is just. But it is still read. 'Whatever else is read,' says Professor Freeman, 'Gibbon must be.' "

Gibbon lived in an age of criticism, cold, sceptical, questioning. He shared the prevailing point of view to the full. His magnificent intellect sheds the most dazzling light; but it never warms. He traverses the ages with the firm tread of one who is complete master of his material; but also with the sneer of the cynic, to whom the greatest men appear grotesquely small, and to whom the great movements that have swayed the hearts of nations appear to have been built largely upon delusions.

The weapon which Gibbon uses most frequently and successfully is irony. He lived in an age when it was still dangerous to cast doubt upon the miraculous element in the propagation of Christianity in the first three centuries. But what could not be done openly could be insinuated ironically. Indeed, wherever Gibbon has to deal with ecclesiastical affairs, an overindulgence in this mocking tone mars the effect of the writing.

He belittled Christianity in particular. "The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity," says Mr. Birrell, "was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the construc-

tion his fellow-men have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in an historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the 'Rise and Progress of the Christian Church.' . . . We have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion that Gibbon is the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

Gibbon's style falls short of the very highest. He is always dignified; but, at his worst, he is affected and pompous. His diction, though less satirised than that of his friend Dr. Johnson, is far less pure than that of Goldsmith or of Burke. He is not an author from whom it is easy to quote short passages; the following sentences give some slight idea of the stately flow of his narrative:

> The martial and ambitious spirit of Trajan formed a very singular contrast with the moderation of his successor. The restless activity of Hadrian was not less remarkable when compared with the gentle repose of Antoninus Pius. The life of the former was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. Careless of the differences of season and of climates, he marched on foot, and bareheaded, over the snows of Caledonia, and in the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honoured with the presence of the monarch.

The following description of Mahomet is from the *Decline and Fall:*

> According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person—an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it

has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country: his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca: the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action; and although his designs might gradually expand with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius.

The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia; and the fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers of eloquence, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian; his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view; and some fancy has been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian traveller. He compares the nations and religions of the earth; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies; beholds with pity and indignation the degeneracy of the times; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest, that

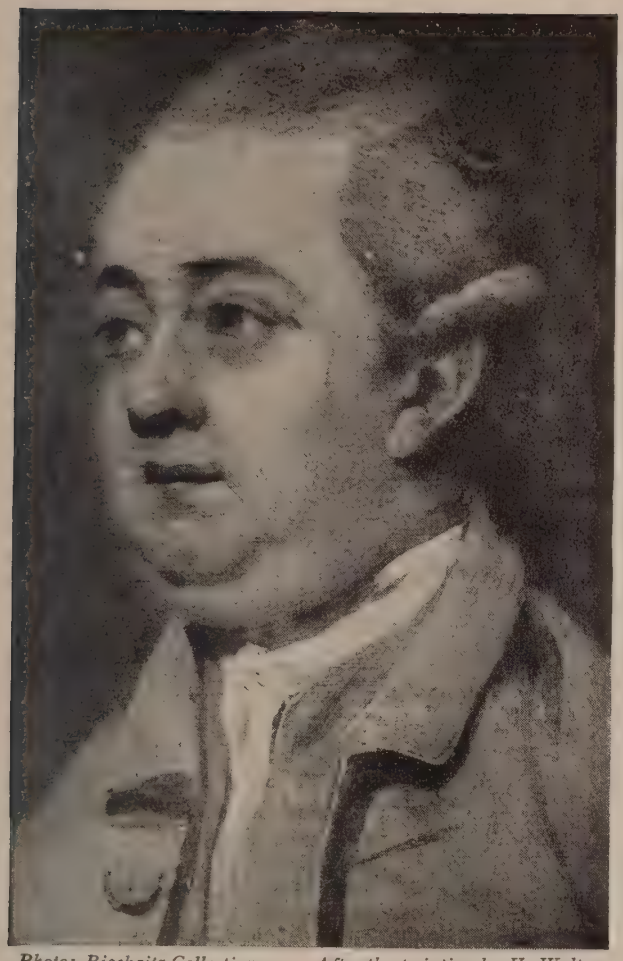
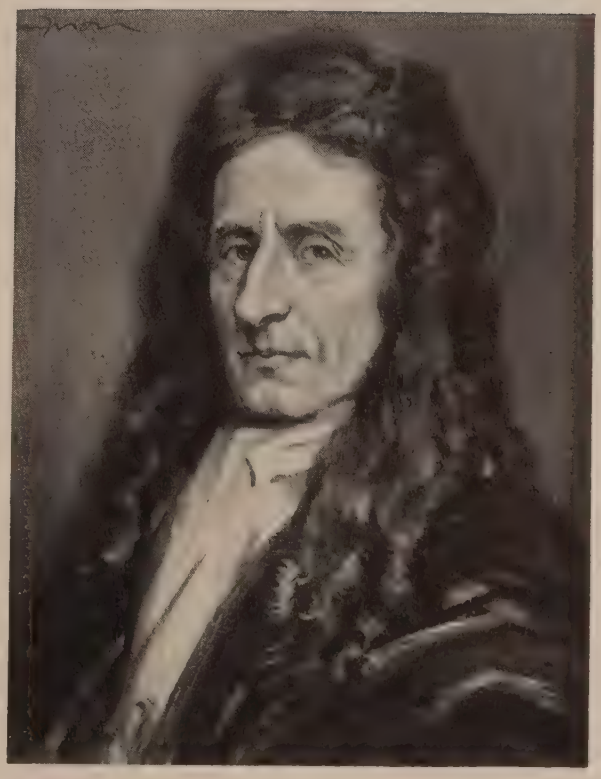


Photo: Rischgitz Collection. *After the painting by H. Walton.*

EDWARD GIBBON

National Portrait Gallery, London.

E. A. Freeman, the historian, wrote: "That Gibbon should ever be displaced seems impossible. . . ." Gibbon wrote his autobiogaphy no fewer than seven times, intending probably to combine the versions, but this he never did, and all the seven were published in 1896. They were combined, however, by Lord Sheffield.



JOHN LOCKE

Locke, who was born in 1632, is still one of the least negligible of English philosophers. His *Essay on the Human Understanding*, published in 1690, influenced thought widely in England and France. He gave eighteen years to its composition. In it he discusses ideas and their association, the relation of thought to speech, the nature and uses of knowledge, and the limits imposed on the human understanding. His inquiries were developed by Berkeley, Hume, and Spencer, but extended furthest by Kant.

Photo: Anderson.

RUINS OF THE FORUM, ROME

Beyond the broken pillars of the Forum, the market-place of Rome and the meeting-place of the Roman populace, stood the Capitol, the great Roman temple. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is probably the greatest history of all time. It was as he sat among the ruins of the Capitol in 1765, watching the sun going down over the Eternal City, that Gibbon conceived the colossal and magnificent scheme of narrating the history of the decay of the power of Rome.

instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the east, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bostra and Damascus; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle, and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Cadijah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eyes of genius might discern some objects invisible to his grosser companions; some seeds of knowledge might be cast upon a fruitful soil; but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity, and I cannot perceive in the life or writings of Mahomet that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every region of that solitary world the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled, by the calls of devotion and commerce; in the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted or forced to implore the rites of hospitality; and the enemies of Mahomet have named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius; and the uniformity of a work denotes the hand of a single artist. From his earliest youth Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation: each year, during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world, and from the arms of Cadijah: in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heavens but in the mind of the prophet. The faith which, under the name of Islam, he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction—that there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the apostle of God.

The effectiveness of the style of Gibbon, as Professor Saintsbury expresses it, "lies mainly in a peculiar roll of sentence, con-

ducted throughout with a wavelike movement, and ending with a sound so arranged as to echo over the interval of sense and breath till the next is well on its way."

From the literary standpoint Gibbon's interesting *Autobiography* is the most important of his writings, but it has been completely overshadowed by the seven massive volumes of the *Decline and Fall,* the first volume of which appeared in 1776 and the last in 1788. He died suddenly in London on January 16, 1794.

Gibbon was a man of a calm and cool temperament. He was vain and affected in his manners, but a brilliant conversationalist. "It has been wittily said of him that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing."

§ 3

Horace Walpole

As Gibbon represents the detached and dignified scepticism of the eighteenth century, so Horace Walpole is the supreme English example of its artificiality and its joy in the things that do not matter. Horace Walpole's letters are one of the most illuminative documents of the century. Lord Chesterfield's famous letters to his son are also a revelation of the mind of his time, as are, to a lesser extent, the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Notable Prose-writers

Among other notable prose-writers of the period are David Hume, the historian, Adam Smith, the economist and author of *Wealth of Nations,* and Jeremy Bentham, the political philosopher, who, in what was eminently an age of reason, carried on the great English philosophical tradition derived from Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke.

James Boswell

James Boswell, to whom we owe the greatest and most entertaining biography in our literature, perhaps in any literature, survived his great master and subject, Dr. Johnson, by eleven years. Born at Auchinleck, in Ayrshire, he came of an old Scottish legal family and was himself a prospective lawyer at the Scottish Bar. But for Boswell the world was "full of a number of things," and it is difficult to conceive that he could ever have toiled to success in the law. He had a genius for being interested, and an insatiable appetite for general information and lively human intercourse. Johnson summed up a great deal of Boswell when he described him as "the best travelling companion in the world." He was enjoyable because he enjoyed, and interesting because he was interested. This is the only reasonable explanation of his extraordinary triumph as a biographer. His self-indulgence, his vanity, his often foolish candour, and his lust for notoriety do not count much against his alertness of observation, his boundless good-humour, and his enviable self-satisfaction.

Even at twenty Boswell yearned for London and important acquaintance in the literary world. It was in his second visit to London, at twenty-three, that he realised his consuming ambition to meet the Dictator. His introducer was Tom Davies, the bookseller, and the scene was the back parlour of Davies's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden, and the date—the most memorable in Boswell's life—was May 16, 1763, when Johnson was aged fifty-four. Boswell describes what happened with his usual frankness:

> At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop. Mr. Davies, having perceived him through the glass door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, he announced his awful approach to

me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my lord, it comes."

Thenceforward with interruptions due to Boswell's intermittent legal studies, his eccentric travels, his marriage and return to Scotland, the two were constantly together. Johnson's intimates soon observed the alliance and were inclined to resent it. "Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?" someone asked. "He is not a cur," replied Goldsmith, "he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport and he has the faculty of sticking." Johnson, it was, who forced his election to the Literary Club. It was Boswell, on the other hand, who forced Johnson by sheer cajolery and not a little plotting into his tour through Scotland and the Hebrides. Throughout Johnson thoroughly understood that he was being "boswellised" by Boswell; indeed, he encouraged him in his task.

The true merit and wonder of Boswell's great work lies in a blend of sympathy, imaginative insight, and enterprise which was peculiarly his own and which has never been equalled since.

Boswell always keeps his eye on the object, is never wandering or tedious, and his style is unaffected and clear. He fairly took charge of his subject and resolved to present it truthfully. To Hannah More, who begged him to soften his portrait, he replied, "I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody."

After Johnson's death, in 1784, Boswell sat down to write his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* It had a mixed reception; caricaturists and critics found plenty of material in it for their wit, Horace Walpole calling it "the story of a mountebank and his zany." But the *Tour* is of the very stuff of the *Life*. The *Life* itself appeared in May, 1791, and despite much criticism became immediately popular. The first edition (of 1,700 copies) was followed by a second in 1793.

Photo: Alinari.

ATTILA

The Vatican, Rome.

Attila, the most famous of the Hun destroyers of the Roman Empire, was named the "Scourge of God." He mastered northern Italy and spared Rome itself only on the intercession of Pope Leo I.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

JULIAN THE APOSTATE PRESIDING AT A CONFERENCE OF SECTARIANS

After the painting by E. Armitage, R.A.
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Julian, who was Roman Emperor from A.D. 361 to 363, is famous for his renunciation of Christianity and his decree that the very name "Christian" should be abolished; even more for his last words uttered after his fatal wounding in his expedition against Persia, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

In 1789 Boswell had lost his wife, and thereafter his life became more and more irregular. He died in London after a short illness, May 19, 1795.

§ 4

White of Selborne

No contrast could be more striking than that between Izaak Walton and the next of the great English country writers, Gilbert White. Born in the village of Selborne in Hampshire, in 1720, it was not until sixty-eight years later that he published the little book which was to make his birthplace famous. Socially and culturally, Gilbert White typified the educated gentleman of the eighteenth century. He was a fellow of his college, and settled down, unmarried, to the duties of a country clergyman in his native place. When he began, in 1767, to write his *Natural History of Selborne,* in the form of personal letters to a naturalist of his acquaintance, he had not the slightest idea of its ever appearing in printed form. To this, undoubtedly, much of the quiet charm of the book is due; for no book of equal repute can compete with it in unaffectedness and unforced simplicity of manner.

It is the very first book to present the facts of natural history, free from the Latin and the pedantry, to say nothing of the legendary traditions, with which all previous writings on the subject had been loaded. It is completely free from unicorns of every kind; the birds and animals with which it deals being as homely and familiar as was the author. The *Natural History of Selborne* has none of the passion which infuses all the work of Richard Jefferies or of the philosophising which marks the work of Thoreau. Nor has it much of the poetry or romance so characteristic of Walton's *Compleat Angler.* Placid, serene, scholarly, and leisurely, it is definitely a pedestrian book, yet one with a dignified step. One is not at all surprised to learn that

its author might often be observed on his walks taking a cloth from his pocket and flicking the dust from his boots. This note of particularity runs through the whole volume. It is observation and reflection that lends interest and charm to the whole of this celebrated book.

§ 5

The Letters of Junius

There is one other writer who, by the mystery attending his person probably as much as by his literary efforts, has attracted considerable attention.

In the columns of the *Public Advertiser* from January 21, 1769, to January 21, 1772, there appeared a series of open letters, violently attacking the King and the Government of the Duke of Grafton, which live in literary history as the *Letters of Junius.* The identity of the writer was for many years a matter of speculation, and, among other people, they were attributed to Burke, Chatham, Wilkes, Chesterfield, Horne Tooke, Horace Walpole, and Gibbon. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that they were the work of Sir Philip Francis, a freakish politician, who fought a duel in India with Warren Hastings, was concerned in a notorious divorce action, and supported Wilberforce in his crusade against the slave trade. Junius was a superficial politician, but the vividness and vehemence of his invective make it almost comparable to Swift's, and there is no other political writing in English literature after his time that has the same forcefulness, except the famous *Runnymede Letters,* written by Disraeli.

The characteristics of the *Junius Letters* have been summed up by Professor Saintsbury. "An affectation of exaggerated moral indignation, claptrap rhetorical interrogations, the use, clever enough if it were not so constant, of balanced antitheses, a very good ear for some, though by no means many, cadences and rhythms, some ingenuity in trope and metaphor, and a cun-

ning adaptation of that trick of specialising with proper names with which Lord Macaulay has surfeited readers for the last half-century—these, though by no means all, are the chief features of the Junian method."

The following extract from a letter addressed to the Duke of Grafton with its insinuated attack on George III is characteristic of the method and the style of Junius:

> With any other prince, the shameful desertion of him in the midst of that distress, which you alone had created, in the very crisis of danger, when he fancied he saw the throne already surrounded by men of virtue and abilities, would have outweighed the memory of your former services. But his Majesty is full of justice, and understands the doctrine of compensations; he remembers with gratitude how soon you had accommodated your morals to the necessities of his service, how cheerfully you had abandoned the engagements of private friendship, and renounced the most solemn professions to the public. The sacrifice of Lord Chatham was not lost on him. Even the cowardice and perfidy of deserting him may have done you no disservice in his esteem. The instance was painful, but the principle might please.

Sir Philip Francis died in 1818.

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XXII

ROBERT BURNS

ROBERT BURNS

§ 1

ROBERT BURNS

A National Shrine

THERE is, in the tiny village of Alloway, about two miles from the town of Ayr, a two-roomed cottage, in which, on the 25th of January, 1759, Robert Burns was born. Local scepticism as to the authentic "clay biggin' " having survived so long has never been seriously regarded by the poet's biographers, and this humble dwelling, preserving, no doubt somewhat artfully, every feature of the peasant domesticity of eighteenth-century Scotland, is a national shrine which for several generations has attracted not only fervent Scots but notable visitors from many and far-distant parts of the world.

The poet's father, William Burns or Burness (for so alternately he spelled his name), had been a labouring gardener near Edinburgh, and came to Ayrshire as gardener and overseer to a gentleman of small estate on the banks of the Doon. He leased, from another proprietor, a few acres of his own, and married Agnes Brown, who, though she had no education in the conventional sense of the term, was a woman of bright intelligence, with that oral culture in tale, tradition, and poetry not uncommon in the country-women of her period. From his mother, it is generally assumed, Robert Burns, the eldest of a family of seven, took his temperament, his fancy, and imagination. He was, in features, philosophy, and character, a very different type of man from his father, who, however, had a marked and admirable individuality of his own.

Of professional teaching, Robert Burns, in truth, had but a limited and erratic experience. His father and a few neighbouring householders engaged between them for two years a young itinerant teacher for the tuition of their children, and on this excellent dominie's removal elsewhere the father himself taught the boy at home. A precocious passion for reading was evoked; Pope's works and a collection of letters by the best prose-writers of Queen Anne's time set young Burns assiduously scribbling at the age of twelve. At thirteen he went for a few weeks to a school in Dalrymple to improve his penmanship; at fourteen a like brief period was spent with his first tutor, in Ayr, in the study of English, French (which in course of time he could read with some facility), and Latin, in which he never got beyond the rudiments. At seventeen he attended a school at Kirkoswald for the study of mensuration, and the few months spent there completed all the orthodox education he was ever to have.

Its spasmodic character was unavoidably due to the straitened circumstances of the Burns family. Ill-fortune attended every effort of William Burns to improve his social condition; having left the Alloway cottage and croft to lease, in succession, the farms of Mount Oliphant and Lochlea, he failed with both, and in 1784 died of consumption.

Early Struggles

Anticipating the failure with Lochlea, Robert and his brother Gilbert, three months before their father's death, took the farm of Mossgiel, which was stocked with the individual savings of the whole family, who wrought upon its cold and grudging acres for four years, during which the two brothers allowed themselves each only £7 per annum of wages.

If Mossgiel gave a wretched return to husbandry it was fertile enough in poetry. Burns was now 25 years of age. For ten years, in his hours of remission from hard manual labour on his father's holdings, he had read widely and wisely. He had

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BURNS

Nasmyth's original portrait, painted 1787.

National Portrait Gallery, Scotland.

Photo: Ritchie Collection.

THE MEETING OF BURNS AND SCOTT, IN SCIENNES HOUSE, EDINBURGH, THE RESIDENCE OF PROFESSOR ADAM FERGUSON, IN THE WINTER OF 1786 AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE KILMARNOCK EDITION OF HIS POEMS

Scott was then a boy of fifteen, and years later wrote of the fire and beauty of Burns's eyes.

shone in the rustic debates of young men's "mutual improvement" societies, had been shedding his native shyness and gaucherie at masonic gatherings and village dances; had gained self-assurance from manifold opportunities for pitting his native wit and logic against the academic dogmas of many social superiors. From early manhood he had manifestly been an idealist and a sentimentalist, acutely responsive to feminine charms, and his first verses were a tribute at 15 years of age to a girl whose singing in the harvest field had enraptured him. A second platonic charmer, when he was but seventeen, had "overset his trigonometry and sent him off from his studies at a tangent." At twenty-two he was more genuinely in love with Alison Begbie, a servant-maid on a neighbouring farm; wrote three poems to her, proposed to marry her, and was rejected.

The heroine of "Sweet Afton" is supposed to have been Mary Campbell, the poet's "Highland Mary."

Flow gently, sweet Afton! among thy green braes;
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds, in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear;
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering Fair.

To the untimely death of Mary Campbell we owe his "Address to Mary in Heaven," written on the third anniversary of her death. The poet's wife noticed that towards the darkening he grew sad and wandered into the barn-yard, "where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star. Immediately on entering the house he sat down and wrote the lines, 'To Mary in Heaven,' and gave them to his wife."

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,

Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity can not efface
Those records dear of transports past,
Thy image at our last embrace,
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

The well-known plaintive song, "The Banks o' Doon," was suggested by an unhappy love affair which, however, was not one of the poet's own.

Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care!
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wanton thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou mindst me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!
And my fause Luver staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

His local renown, however, began with no love-lyrics, naturally not for general circulation, but with satirical on-

slaughts upon the Calvinistic bigotry which at the time, not in Ayrshire only, but all over Scotland, denied to the faithful the very elements of culture and intellectual freedom, and set the country half-mad with polemical controversies.

"The first of my poetic off-spring that saw the light," wrote Burns in after years, "was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.'" This was "The Holy Tulzie" or "Twa Herds," a daring enough intrusion on the sacred precincts of the Kirk, but being purely personal in its application it was not as irritant in its effect as the satire which followed—"Holy Willie's Prayer," in which, while one real man alone was pilloried, he was obviously portrayed, in all his pietistic hypocrisy, as typical of a class which too often ruled the Kirk Sessions. The dovecots of the Kirk were ruffled even more by "The Holy Fair" which followed—a Teniers-like depiction of unseemly features attending the rustic festival to which the annual celebration of the Lord's Supper had, in certain parishes, degenerated.

Lockhart, in his incomparably fine *Life of Burns,* would seem to deplore the ruthless irreverence with which the poet dealt with those ugly aspects of life among the orthodox about him. But Lockhart was a son of the manse, to that extent prejudiced against its criticism, and not yet far enough removed from the period of which Burns wrote to recognise, as Scotland universally does to-day, that the poet in truth was doing the Christian Church, though rudely, a cleansing service.

Burns, essentially, was a man of religious temperament, which does not always imply perfect Christian practice. Atheism, and a materialistic conception of the universe, seem never to have entered into his mind; and piety manifest in humility and tenderness, in upright walk and earnest conversation, in the Covenanters' martyrdom, or the devotion of family worship, in him found always chords responsive. "That the same man

should have produced 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and the 'Holy Fair' about the same time will ever continue to move wonder and regret," says Lockhart, whose assurance on this point looks curiously ill-founded to-day.

It was, without question, an unorthodox and fairly free-living section of the Ayrshire bourgeoisie which most applauded these early satires of the poet, and included the closest of his friends. It was probably as the mordant critic of the "unco' guid" they understood him best, and laid the foundation of his renown; other aspects of Burns could only have appeared to them, if at all with approval, when he published his first book.

§ 2

The Kilmarnock Edition

In 1786, when he was 27 years of age, convinced that Mossgiel could at its best give only a meagre substance to so large a family, Burns decided to abandon the plough and try his fortune in the West Indies, where many of his countrymen were plantation managers. A post was secured for him, but he had not sufficient money to pay his passage to Jamaica, and to secure this he set about publishing his first book from the press of a Kilmarnock printer. Three hundred subscribers were got, and an edition of six hundred copies was printed and sold at three shillings. Copies of this Kilmarnock edition have, in recent times, sold at remarkable prices; in one case at least at £1,000. Burns from the entire sales made about £20, with which he was by no means ill-satisfied.

In this Kilmarnock edition, almost every literary faculty of the poet was manifest; had it never had a successor it would have been sufficient to secure his permanent reputation in Scotland as a real bardic singer in the authentic national tradition. It was unmistakably a work of genius, of extraordinary technical accomplishment, and brilliant enough to warrant all the

applause it met with. There was in it not only far more vital human stuff than in any Scottish poet who had gone before him, but a fresh spirit peculiarly acceptable to his times.

There was much of a journalist in Burns's composition (indeed, he was once offered a journalistic post in London!), and his lighter verse, like much of Byron and Pope, was topical, for its appeal depending on the whims, events, and passions of the hour.

What charmed his compatriots most in the Kilmarnock edition, there is no question, was his outspokenness, which spared no social sham, no political injustice, derided the pompous "elected person," proclaimed the dignity of the humblest kind of labour, shot thunderbolts of sly invective and idealism across a landscape sombre with superstitions social and ecclesiastic.

'Is there for honest Poverty
  That hings his head, an' a' that;
The coward slave—we pass him by,
  We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Our toils obscure an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
  The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
  Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
  A Man's a Man for a' that:
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
  Is king o' men for a' that.

There are but a few lyrics in the Kilmarnock edition, and these are far from his best in that field—the bulk of the book is made up of fearlessly heterodox lampoons, bacchic poems on Scots drink, pawky and witty rhymed epistles to his friends wherein

all his young, wild, gallant philosophy of life came out in terms deliciously frank and native—the confidences of a fine fellow in a warm expansive hour; thoughts humane and tender of sheep, and mice, and old mares and daisies.

The wider fame of the poet was established instantly by this collection of his verse, most of it written in a few winter months in Mossgiel; he was no longer singer of a parish, but Caledonian Bard. There were in it poems which in their vein, for spontaneity, gusto, and sheer native inspiration, he was never to surpass—"The Twa Dogs," "Address to the Deil," "Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," "The Auld Farmer's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie," "Scotch Drink," "To a Mouse," "To a Mountain Daisy."

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou'st met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

. . . . . .

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble field,
Unseen, alane.

"Hallowe'en" was the happiest and most observant and humorous description of old superstitious revels.

Not all of Burns's finished manuscripts figured in the Kilmarnock edition; it was apparently a judicious and representative selection from a much larger body of accomplished verse already executed, and left out, for example, the "Cantata" called "The Jolly Beggars," that "puissant and splendid production," as Matthew Arnold called it, wherein old gangrel life and charac-

ter, studied in a Mauchline tavern, found expression in a sequence of songs, dramatic, humorous, descriptive, all composed in moments of true lyrical elation.

The Poet in Edinburgh

The success of the Kilmarnock edition put an end to the poet's project of emigration. For the preparation of a new edition (his Kilmarnock publisher would not risk a second), he was induced to go to Edinburgh, where his fame had preceded him. For six months he lodged in the Scottish capital in very humble quarters with an old Ayrshire friend, and found himself the lion of a season in a society then really metropolitan, comprising a genuine aristocracy of lineage and intellect. A robust figure, 5 ft. 10 in. in height, with a slight stoop, due doubtless to years of toil in the plough-stilts; dark-haired, with keen black glowing eyes such as Walter Scott declared he had never seen in any other person; his conversation free, unaffected, ever interesting; his dress "midway between the holiday costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated" —Burns got Edinburgh's complete approval.

An association of the most distinguished members of the northern aristocracy—the Caledonian Hunt—handsomely subscribed to his second edition, which brought him about four hundred pounds.

It may be surmised, however, that for Edinburgh his *éclat* was that of the rustic prodigy, with little conception that his name and fame would long outlive those of the most notable men who patronised him. No serious attempt was made by anyone in the literary and fashionable coteries to rescue this young man of rare and obvious genius from a condition of life so incongruous with his gifts and his accomplishments. He returned to Mossgiel and Jean Armour, who had borne him twins some months before, and whom in the following year he married—a partner from whom till the day of his death he doubtless got

more domestic happiness than he could have got from Mrs. Maclehose, the Edinburgh grass-widow, to whose "Clarinda" he played "Sylvander" in a correspondence which, in its style and insincerity, showed that the influence of the epistolary art of the period of Queen Anne was anything but salutary.

It was during the honeymoon that Burns wrote "Of a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw," out of compliment to his wife:

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There's wild-woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between:
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonie flower that springs,
By fountain, shaw, or green;
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

With his Jean he took a farm at Ellisland in Dumfriesshire, on the banks of the Nith, delightfully situated—but a poet's selection rather than a shrewd farmer's. Here, among many other poems, which augmented his fame, he composed his famous "Tam o' Shanter," wherein are concentrated all the best natural qualities of his verse. It was first published in Edinburgh periodicals in 1791; after the Edinburgh second edition, indeed, Burns seemed content to disseminate his poems, or let his friends first print them, through such commercially unprofitable channels, or to send them gratis to compilers of song miscellanies.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JAMES HOGG, THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD

Perhaps Hogg's most remembered ballad is "When the Kye comes Hame," beginning:

Come, all ye jolly shepherds
That whistle through the glen,
I'll tell ye of a secret
That courtiers dinna ken.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

BURNS'S COTTAGE. THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE POET

The cottage is situated in the valley of Alloway, near the town of Ayr. It has been carefully preserved and has been made a place of pilgrimage by countless admirers of the Poet.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

TAM O' SHANTER

After the picture by John Burnet.

The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious;
The Souter tauld his queerest stories,
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus.

The original of Tam o' Shanter was Douglas Graham, a farmer at Shanter, in Carrick. Souter Johnie was in real life John Davidson, a Kirkoswald cobbler.

He regarded "Tam o' Shanter" as his best work, an estimate with which most discerning critics have agreed. It was written while he was still a farmer, though eking out his livelihood in the service of King George as a probationary "gauger" or exciseman. In 1791 he gave up his farm, became wholly an exciseman for a salary of £70 a year, and took up residence in Dumfries.

Dumfries itself was a town of taverns, and meridian drams, and rude *noctes ambrosianæ,* and Burns too readily fell into its dissipated habits. There is every reason to believe, however, that his disrepute on this account has been considerably exaggerated; his work was always carefully and conscientiously done to the satisfaction of his superiors; there was no suggestion of domestic unhappiness, and his correspondence up till his latter days betrays no evidence of a mind distracted from a decent man's ideals and duties.

Burns died on 21st July, 1796, as the result of rheumatic fever, just when an excise collectorship was in sight for him and "a life of literary leisure with a decent competence." He was only 37 years of age. He had not long enough survived to see more than a mere fraction of his poetry in collected form, and after his "crowded hour of glorious life" in Edinburgh, there had been little beyond the encouragement of a few private correspondents to help his confidence in the permanent value of his work. The full extent of his achievement was far from being comprehended by his countrymen, though his death created a genuine sentiment of natural bereavement. He had, on his death-bed, playfully requested that the "awkward squad" of his Volunteer Company should not fire over his grave; incongruous military pomp attended his funeral, but the "awkward squad" whose blundering he could not anticipate was first manifest in his earliest biographers, Currie and Walker, who were influenced by every scrap of malicious gossip they could find regarding him.

§ 3

Tardy Appreciation

When the poems and songs of Burns, in their entirety, and a considerable body of his correspondence, were published after his death, the extraordinary nature of the man and the full scope of his poetical genius were for the first time manifest to the world. No English poet of his century questioned his claim to rank among the greatest of lyric singers, and Goethe pronounced him first of lyrists in virtue of the two hundred and fifty songs which he wrote or rescued from rags, squalor, and indecency to adorn and retransfigure.

This generous acceptance of the genius of Burns far beyond his own country was the more remarkable since understanding and appreciation must, in such cases, inevitably have been hampered by the Scots vernacular in which all the best of his work was written. That he could write impeccable and stylish English both in verse and prose is amply demonstrated, but he was unquestionably happiest and at his best in his native language, whose use by him confirmed its magic power, as in the old Border Ballads (for which he cared so little), to evoke visions and emotions not so readily responsive to well-worn, too familiar English.

He was in the true line of descent, as a poet from Barbour and Dunbar and the old Scots "makaris" generally; yet his moods of emulation were roused by poets more modern—Fergusson and Ramsay, and many others much less well-known to fame. His favourite metrical measure was the *rime couée* of old Alexander Scott's "Complaint Aganis Cupid," revived by Sir Robert Sempill in "Habbie Simpson"; it is the stave of many of his poems, including the prophetic "Daisy."

> Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
> That fate is thine—no distant date;

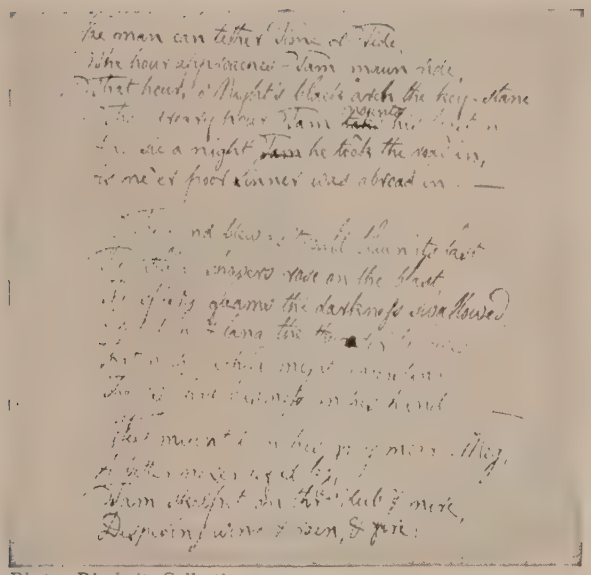

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

PART OF ORIGINAL MS. OF "TAM O' SHANTER," BY ROBERT BURNS

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

ALLOWAY KIRK AND THE BURIAL-PLACE OF BURNS'S FATHER

It was in Alloway Kirkyard that Tam o' Shanter saw "an unco' sight: Warlocks and witches in a dance" and "auld Nick in shape o' beast."

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

BURNS'S HIGHLAND MARY

By Bouvier.

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene.

Photo: Stephen & Pollock, Ayr.

AULD BRIG TO NEW BRIG: "I'LL BE A BRIG WHEN YE'RE A SHAPELESS CAIRN"

From a sketch by J. Campbell.

The Auld Brig is seen in the distance. Burns's New Brig, removed in 1878, has since been replaced by a second "New Brig." Burns's poetical dialogue "The Brigs of Ayr" was written in 1786, while the new bridge was being built.

Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

The same responsiveness to ancient Scots metrical airs is seen in his partiality for the refrain form of

Nae treasures, nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang—

a measure whereof Alexander Montgomerie is supposed to have been inventor in the sixteenth century in "The Bankis of Helicon" and "The Cherry and the Slae."

He was no Puritan yet; "though coarse he was never vulgar," as Byron put it, and, called upon by Thomson to provide songs for parlour audiences, he cleansed rude old ditties; sometimes in no more than a phrase or couplet found "the soul of good in all things evil," and re-created lyrics that express the purest love, the loftiest ecstasy. Yet unquestionably the best of his songs owe nothing to earlier models. Among these should be classified "Mary Morison":

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor!
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

or,

O my luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my luve is like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

or,

Ae fond kiss and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, and then for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

In Burns's immediate predecessors, the old ballad atmosphere of romance was negligible or wholly absent, in spite of their preoccupation with Prince Charlie and the Jacobites. He, too, was Jacobite, when the wind of sentiment lay in that direction, though a man more unlikely to approve of the Stuarts as they actually were would be hard to find. Romance is best inspired, not by the contemplation of dynasties or heroic figures, but by conception of the mystic grandeur of simple acts and simple words and gestures in the great cruces of life. To these was the genius of Burns ever responsive, as in—

It was a' for our rightfu' king,
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' king,
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do
And a' is done in vain;
My love and native land, fareweel!
For I maun cross the main, my dear;
For I maun cross the main.

He turned him right, and round about,
Upon the Irish shore,

And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
With Adieu for evermore, my dear;
With Adieu for evermore!

The lyric cry of such verse transcends mere incidents in history, and, without any associated historical ideas to help out its significance, finds its way to the human heart. So, too, one may be indifferent to the fate of a sheep-stealer, yet experience the same proud human solace as in Henley's "Captain of My Soul" in "Macpherson's Farewell":

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.

Sae ratingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round
Below the gallows-tree.

O what is death but parting breath?
On mony a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again.

A Nation's Poet

Passionate love of country; genulne sympathy with all animate things; emotional response to Nature in every mood and aspect; revolt against anciently accepted bonds—religious, social, and political; fearless independence; a clairvoyant sense of all that is implied in racial sentiment; unaffected and masterly use of the vernacular speech, and the power to combine the loftiest reflections with true wit and humour—these are the qualities in Burns that put him first among all creative artists in the hearts of Scottish people. He is a nation's poet in the most rigid sense, *hors concours,* and without any prospect of a successor. No

Scotsman—even in the Gaelic highlands, for which Burns never wrote—can escape coming under his influence even to-day, when the vulgarity of the music-halls comes quickly to the remotest glens. The Ayrshire poet did not fulfil the magnificent promise of that first Kilmarnock book, but in his later phase as songster he produced undying lyrics that take the heart of the world by storm.

We may fitly conclude this short survey by quoting a tribute from Carlyle's famous essay:

> "If we take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in 'Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut,' to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness of 'Mary in Heaven'; from the glad kind greeting of 'Auld Langsyne,' or the comic archness of 'Duncan Gray,' to the fire-eyed fury of 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him. . . .
>
> "His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only, but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name,* the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest."

§ 4

JAMES HOGG

The Ettrick Shepherd

James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd," mainly owes his place among the poets of his country as the author of "The Queen's

Wake." The greater part of his work, however, is of second or third merit. Hogg was first a shepherd and then a sheep farmer among the hills of Ettrick and Yarrow.

The following note in Hogg's *Autobiography* is interesting. He had just heard of the death of Robert Burns:

> "Every day I pondered on the genius and fate of Burns. I wept, and always thought with myself—what is to hinder me from succeeding Burns? I, too, was born on the 25th of January, and I have much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and can sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then I wept again because I could not write. However, I resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns. . . ."

Hogg's association with Sir Walter Scott in collecting material for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* spurred him to imitation of the old work, and it seems more than likely that he put matter of his own into the *Minstrelsy.*

His school education was of a meagre kind; indeed, Hogg has said that although he composed with ease he found the actual writing out of his composition a difficult task, as he had forgotten the little of the art of writing that he had ever learned. He practised writing, however, on the hillside, scratching the letters on large slate stones. Among his best work is "Kilmeny," the Thirteenth Bard's song from "The Queen's Wake."

Bonnie Kilmeny gaed up the glen;
But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,
Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
It was only to hear the yorkin sing,
And pu' the cress-flower round the spring,
The scarlet hypp and the hind-berrye,
And the nest that hung frae the hazel tree;
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.

But lang may her minny look o'er the wa';
And lang may she seek i' the greenwood shaw;
Lang the laird o' Duneira blame,
And lang, lang greet or Kilmeny come hame!

Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face,
As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.
For Kilmeny had been she knew not where,
And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare,
Kilmeny had been where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,
But it seemed as the harp of the sky had run,
And the airs of heaven played round her tongue
When she spoke of the lovely forms she had seen,
And a land where sin had never been.

This story of the fairy-captured Kilmeny is sheer magic. Hogg was a lyrical poet of fine grain. Everyone knows his "Skylark":

Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on the dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim;
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

"To the Comet of 1811" is less familiar:

Oh, on thy rapid prow to glide!
To sail the boundless skies with thee,
And plough the twinkling stars aside,
Like foam-bells on a tranquil sea!

To brush the embers from the sun,
The icicles from off the pole,
Then far to other systems run,
Where other moons and planets roll!

Several of Hogg's songs of a national character maintain a great popularity, such as "Cam' ye by Athol," "Flora Macdonald's Farewell," and "Come o'er the Stream, Charlie." Hogg died in 1835 and was buried in Ettrick Churchyard, where rest his shepherd ancestors.

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XXIII

THE LITERATURE THAT MADE THE REVOLUTION

THE LITERATURE THAT MADE THE REVOLUTION

§ 1

VOLTAIRE

GENERALLY, it may be said that during the long reign of Louis XV, who had all his great-grandfather's vices, and none of his qualities of dignity and statesmanship, France was miserably misgoverned and overtaxed. There was no justice for the poor, no freedom of speech, no efficiency in administration; the nobility had lost its interest in letters, to a large extent the Church had abandoned its divine mission; the armies were starved, with the consequence that the victories of the seventeenth century were followed by constant defeats in the eighteenth. It was in this atmosphere that the literature of revolt sprang into being. It began with Montesquieu, whose *Lettres Persanes* are a series of gay, light-hearted correspondence supposed to be written by Persian travellers in Paris, wittily describing the corruption of French life, and making serious suggestions for more satisfactory government.

A Great Satirist

Voltaire was five years younger than Montesquieu. His real name was François Arouet, and he was born in Paris in 1694. His father was a well-to-do notary, and he was educated by the Jesuits. His school-days were tempestuous. One of his early exploits was to write a poem in which Moses was denounced

as an impostor. He quarrelled with his father, and was introduced by his godfather into the dissipated society of Paris during the years that the Duke of Orleans was regent for Louis XV.

Voltaire began his literary career by writing satirical verses which landed him in the Bastille in 1716. He was imprisoned for a year. During the next six years he travelled over half Europe, and in 1725 he was again in the Bastille, this time for challenging an obscure but influential duke with whom he had quarrelled. After another six months in prison Voltaire was ordered to leave Paris, and he landed in England in the middle of May, 1726. Before this visit to England, which had a vital effect on his future work, Voltaire had written poetry which is nowadays never read, and melodramas that had nothing more than a topical value.

Eighteenth-century France regarded Voltaire's epic, the *Henriade,* as comparable to the achievements of Homer and Virgil; but Professor Saintsbury has well described it as "declamatory in tone, tedious in action, and commonplace in character." In England Voltaire met the Walpoles, Bolingbroke, Congreve, and Pope. He studied English life minutely. In his letters to France he described the manners of the Quakers, and the new inoculation against disease. He learned to read English easily, and he not only read Shakespeare, Dryden, and Swift, but he also studied Newton and Locke, the philosophic founder of democracy. He was immensely impressed with the freedom of thought that existed in England, and with the respect paid to men of letters.

Voltaire stayed in England for three years. Lord Morley has said: "He left France a poet, he returned to it a sage." His English letters were published soon after his return to Paris. His incidental criticisms of the established order in France and his contempt of orthodoxy caused a warrant to be issued for his arrest. This time he took refuge in Lorraine, where he spent

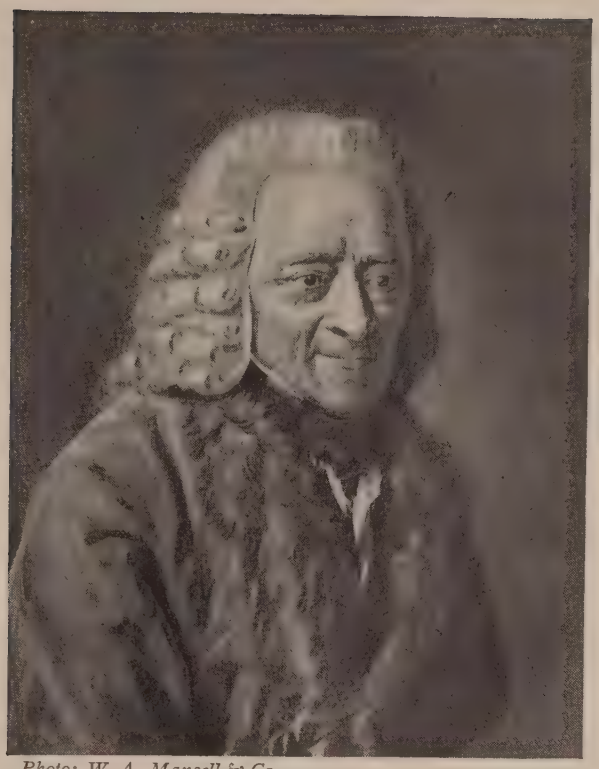

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

VOLTAIRE

After a portrait by Alix.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

VOLTAIRE

After the painting by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

On a certain occasion, Voltaire, whilst dining with the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot, engaged in a battle of wits with one of his fellow-guests. Voltaire won, but his opponent, taking his defeat with ill grace, resorted to a ruse to obtain revenge. A message was sent to Voltaire that he was wanted in the street, and on his way there his opponent's lackeys thrashed him soundly.

The incident depicted is the return of the outraged Voltaire, who demands redress for the affront, only to be informed by his suave host that he is unable to take up the cudgels for him against a superior.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

VOLTAIRE

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

A clever and characteristic caricature in wax.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Sheffield.*

"TO VERSAILLES!" AN INCIDENT OF THE EARLIER DAYS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1789, BY VAL C. PRINSEP, R.A.

Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield.

most of his time until 1740, busy writing drama and poetry. In this year he had his first interview with Frederick the Great of Prussia, with whom he had already had a long correspondence. Five years later Voltaire began another short residence in Paris. Madame de Pompadour had become his friend, and through her influence he obtained the position of historiographer-royal, with a salary of two thousand livres a year. Louis XV, however, who was no fool, was never deceived by Voltaire's mock homage, and his Court favour was short-lived.

In 1751 Voltaire left Paris to make his famous stay with Frederick of Prussia in Berlin. Frederick, one of the most unpleasant monarchs in history, delighted in attracting literary men to Potsdam, but their lot there was not a happy one. As Macaulay said: "The poorest author of that time in London sleeping on a bulk, dining in a cellar, with a cravat of paper, and a skewer for a fork, was a happier man than any of the literary inmates of Frederick's Court."

Voltaire was now fifty-seven. Great as was his reputation in his own country, he was unhappy and dissatisfied that his dramas were not considered equal to those of Corneille and Racine. In Berlin he believed he would find fuller appreciation. His reception was regal, but the friendship between the most powerful monarch in Europe and the greatest wit did not last very long. Frederick was frugal, Voltaire was greedy; Frederick was arrogant, so was the Frenchman. On one occasion the king sent Voltaire some of his verses, asking him for correction and criticism. "See," said Voltaire, "what a quantity of his dirty linen the king has sent me to wash."

Finally Voltaire fled from Prussia and settled in the Château Ferney, near Lake Geneva, which became his permanent home until the end of his life. He lived to be eighty-four. The most considerable of his writings during the latter part of his life was his famous novel *Candide,* in which, in the form of a diary of travel, Voltaire exposes the "sins and savagery of the

times" with a sustained irony unmatched in literature, and with what Mr. A. B. Walkley has called an "impish glee."

Mr. Lytton Strachey says of Voltaire: "He was the most egotistical of mortals, and the most disinterested; he was grasp-ingly avaricious, and profusely generous; he was treacherous, mischievous, frivolous, and mean; yet he was a firm friend and a true benefactor, yet he was profoundly serious and inspired by the noblest enthusiasms."

Considering Voltaire as a writer, Lord Morley says: "Voltaire was a stupendous power, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, or even because his sight was exquisitely keen and clear, but because he saw many new things, after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning."

Voltaire is regarded in France as the most French of all their men of letters. His style is the French ideal of writing, clear yet coloured, strong and simple, always with the wittiest and lightest touch, yet rising with a noble subject into noble heights. To this style of his, forever modulating, every kind of literature came alike—histories, stories, letters, satires, epigrams. Above all, it lent itself to that supreme power of raillery which gained for him the name of the Great Mocker—the raillery against the things he hated—priests, kings, tyrants, and oppressors; against the enemies of the things he fought for—God, love, pity, liberty of thought and action, the right of every man to call his soul his own. It may be remarked that Voltaire, who is often called an atheist, passed his life in fighting the atheistic doctrines of most of his contemporaries, and that he built a church with the inscription "Dedicated by Voltaire to God." "No other church," he remarked, "is dedicated to God, but to the Saints. I prefer to serve the Master rather than the valets."

Voltaire may be called, with some propriety, the Swift of France. Like Swift, he mocked and railed; as with Swift, the vast bulk of his themes were but of passing interest and are now

Photo: Braun.

A GAY BARBER OF SEVILLE

From the painting by F. Maso.

The famous French comedy by P. A. Caron de Beaumarchais was first produced in Paris on February 23, 1775. Written in prose instead of verse, the treatment of character, the study of manners, and the centring of interest in characters drawn from the bourgeoisie were dramatic innovations. The comedy suggested operas by Paisiello, Mozart, and Rossini.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DENIS DIDEROT

After Voltaire and Rousseau, Diderot was the greatest intellectual force of his age in France. His name will always be most closely associated with the *Encyclopædia*, an account of which, of striking interest, is related in the text.

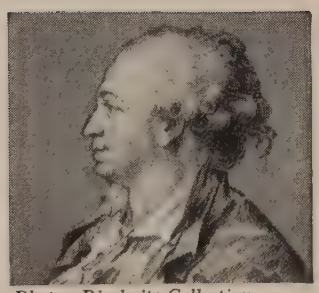

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BEAUMARCHAIS

The Barber of Seville and *The Marriage of Figaro* ensured the fame of Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, a fame extended by the Operatic versions by Rossini and Mozart.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

J. J. ROUSSEAU

After the painting by Albrier.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the son of a watchmaker. His *Social Contract* has been described as the Bible of the Revolution. Of all writers of the period the influence of Rousseau on literature and life was probably the largest.

left unread; like Swift, his most enduring works are satires in the form of stories. *Gulliver's Travels* have their counterpart in *Candide* and *Zadig*. And it is probable that these will continue to be read, if but as masterpieces of story-telling, as long as the two languages endure. But the comparison with Swift leaves out of account the fact that Voltaire is always sane. Sanity was his genius, and his defects are the defects of sanity. In France he is still the idol of those thinkers who put common sense above everything else—French common sense, however, not English.

Voltaire's Style

In the slightest trifles of Voltaire, in writing or in conversation, his style comes flashing forth. The bust of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre was pronounced a speaking likeness. "Not speaking," said Voltaire, "or it would have said something silly." "I wish the Germans," he remarked on another occasion, "more wit and fewer consonants." He made the prettiest compliments and wrote the prettiest drawing-room verses of any poet of his time. Here is an example:

Last night in sleep I seemed a king,
  A crown of gold was mine,
And mine a more delightful thing—
  I loved a maid divine;
A maid, my darling, like to thee;
  And lo, when sleep had flown
The best of these he left to me—
  I only lost my throne!

This same light touch which he displayed in trifles comes out in his more serious work. One or two examples will suffice as well as many to convey an idea of the style which has given Voltaire his unique place in the world of letters.

In rescuing his lady, Semire, from a troop of brigands Zadig received an arrow near the eye. The wound was deep,

an abscess formed, and the eye itself was threatened. Messengers were despatched to Memphis to fetch the celebrated doctor Hermes, who arrived in due course with a train of servants. He paid a visit to the wounded man, and pronounced that he would lose his eye; he even predicted the exact day and hour when the sad event would happen. "If it had been the right eye," he declared, "I could have saved it; but wounds in the left eye are incurable." All Babylon, while they pitied Zadig, were filled with admiration of the doctor's wisdom. Two days later, the abscess broke of its own accord, and Zadig was as well as ever. The learned doctor wrote a book to prove that he had no business to recover and ought to have lost his eye.

Here is a passage which not only shows Voltaire as a story-teller at his best, but reveals the fact that he was a Sherlock Holmes born before his time.

One day when Zadig was walking near a little wood he saw the Queen's chief attendants and several officers running towards him. He noticed that they were in great anxiety, for they ran about as if they were quite bewildered, looking for something of great value which they had lost. When they came up to him the chief Eunuch said: "Have you seen the Queen's pet dog?"

Zadig replied, "It is a little female dog."

"You are right," said the Eunuch.

"It is a very small spaniel," added Zadig; "she has recently had puppies, she has a limp of the left forefoot, and she has very long ears."

"You have seen her, then?" exclaimed the Eunuch joyfully.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have never seen her. I did not know that the Queen had such a dog."

Precisely at the same time, by an extraordinary coincidence, the most beautiful horse in the King's stable had escaped from the hands of the stable attendants and galloped out on the plains of Babylon. The Grand Vizier

and all the other officers ran after it with as much anxiety as the first Eunuch after the spaniel. The Grand Vizier addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had seen the King's horse pass. Zadig replied, "It is a horse which gallops to perfection; it is five feet high, with very small hoofs. It has a tail three and a half feet long; the bit of its bridle is of twenty-three-carat gold; its shoes are of silver."

"What road has it taken? Where is it?" demanded the Vizier.

"I have never seen it," replied Zadig, "and I have never heard it spoken of."

The Grand Vizier and the first Eunuch had no doubt that Zadig had stolen the King's horse and the Queen's dog. They had him conveyed before the Great Desterhan, who condemned him to the knout and to pass the rest of his days in Siberia. The judgment had scarcely been pronounced when the horse and the dog were found. The judges were under the sad necessity of reversing their judgment, but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had never seen what he had seen. He was first obliged to pay this fine; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the council of the Great Desterhan. He spoke in these terms.

"This is what happened to me. I was walking towards the little wood, where I lately encountered the venerable Eunuch and the most illustrious Grand Vizier. I had seen on the sand the traces of an animal, and I had easily judged that they were those of the little dog. The light and the long furrows imprinted on the little eminences of the sand between the traces of the feet showed me that it was a female that had lately given birth to pups. Other traces which appeared to have continually raised the surface of the sand by the side of the front feet told me that she had long ears. As I remarked that the sand was always less crushed by one foot than by the three others, I understood that the dog of our august Queen was, if I may dare say so, a little lame.

"With regard to the King's horse, you must know that while I was walking in the roads of this wood I perceived the marks of the hoofs of a horse. They were all at equal distances. 'Here,' said I, 'is a horse which gallops perfectly.' The dust of the trees in a narrow route only seven feet broad was brushed off here and there, to right and left, at three and half feet from the middle of the road. 'This horse,' I added, 'has a tail of three and half feet long, which, by its movement right and left, has scattered the dust.' I had seen under the trees, which formed a canopy five feet high, newly fallen leaves from the branches, and I knew that this horse had touched them, and therefore it was five feet high. As to the bridle, it must be of twenty-three-carat gold, for it had rubbed its bit against a stone, and I had made the assay of it. I judged, finally, by the marks which its shoes had left on the pebbles of another kind, that it was shod with silver of a fineness of twelve deniers."

Perhaps, as time goes on, the Great Mocker will become more and more regarded as the Great Amuser.

§ 2

DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS

The Encyclopædia

The new ideas, the new knowledge, the whole spirit of revolt against misgovernment and superstition, found expression in the pages of the famous *Encyclopædia,* the first volume of which was published in Paris in 1751 and the final volume in 1772. This great enterprise owed its existence to the energy and courage of Denis Diderot, who was born in 1713. Like Voltaire, he was educated by the Jesuits, and his varied literary life as playwright, novelist, and philosopher is second only in interest and importance to the careers of Voltaire and Rousseau.

The *Encyclopædia,* with which Diderot's name will always

be connected, sprang from a publisher's suggestion that Diderot should prepare a French edition of Ephraim Chambers's *Encyclopædia.* But it extended far beyond such limits. It covers the whole area of human thought and activity, emphasising the triumphs of Science and, to quote Lord Morley, asserting "the democratic doctrine that it is the common people in the nation whose lot ought to be the main concern of the nation's government." Diderot was assisted by a host of distinguished collaborators, the best known of whom were Buffon, the famous naturalist, and Voltaire. As to the manner in which this gigantic scheme was carried out, a letter of Voltaire's to Diderot is of peculiar interest: "Your work is a kind of tower of Babel: things that are good, bad, true, false, grave, and gay, are all jumbled up together. There are articles which seem written by a drawing-room dandy, others by a scullion in the kitchen. The reader is carried from the boldest flight of thought to platitudes that turn him sick."

The *Encyclopædia* naturally gave offence to the upholders of the old order, and the later volumes had to be produced clandestinely, and in constant fear of police interference, and at the end Diderot suffered the mortification of having all his proofs mutilated without his knowledge by a timorous printer.

The *Encyclopædia* was a great success, but Diderot's earnings from it averaged only a hundred and twenty pounds a year for twenty years. He was an apostle of knowledge. His disbelief in revealed religion was as thorough as Voltaire's and much more thorough than Rousseau's. He thought that the world could be saved by knowledge and virtue. He translated *Clarissa* into French, and he was largely responsible for the popularity of Richardson's novels in France in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Apart from the *Encyclopædia, Le Neveu de Rameau* is Diderot's greatest achievement. It is a satire on contemporary manners, written with abounding wit and a sort of bitter pity.

Goethe translated it into German in 1805. Diderot was a critic both of the theatre and of pictures. Writing of his art criticism, Madame Necker, mother of Madame de Staël, said: "Before Diderot, I had never seen anything in pictures except dull and lifeless colours; it was his imagination that gave them relief and life, and it was almost a new sense for which I am indebted to his genius."

He was a man of considerable literary activity, a rapid and careless writer, with independent and unconventional points of view. There has seldom been an author, says Professor Saintsbury, who was more fertile in ideas. "It is impossible to name a subject which Diderot has not treated, and hardly possible to name one on which he has not said striking and memorable things."

Although Diderot believed in little, he hoped for much; although he was oppressed by the present, he had confidence in the future. He had something of the Rabelais optimism and joy in life.

Beaumarchais

In 1784, five years before the Revolution, *The Marriage of Figaro* by Pierre Augustin Caron, better known as Beaumarchais, was produced at the Théâtre Français. Beaumarchais was the son of a watchmaker, a happy-go-lucky literary adventurer, who made frequent visits to Spain and England, and played a considerable part in exciting French enthusiasm for American independence, incidentally making money through the transport of Lafayette's army to the United States. He lived until 1799, spending some of his later years in exile as a suspected traitor to the new French Republic. Years before the production of the *Marriage of Figaro,* Beaumarchais had won considerable fame as the author of *The Barber of Seville,* of which *Figaro* was the sequel. The *Marriage of Figaro* has a definite place in the literature that prepared

the Revolution—Napoleon described it as "the Revolution in action."

§ 3

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Social Contract* has been described as the Bible of the Revolution, was born of Protestant parents at Geneva in 1712. Here we are concerned with Rousseau, as with Voltaire and Diderot, as a writer rather than as a philosopher, but since the value of literature depends on its relation to life the books that have vastly affected human history retain outstanding interest, particularly when the circumstances of the lives of the men who wrote them are as strange and arresting as the social atmosphere in which they were produced.

Life and Work

Rousseau is Voltaire's one rival. Voltaire belonged to the professional class and from his youth lived in the world of manners and breeding. Rousseau was the son of a watchmaker, and spent years of his early manhood as a vagabond, and had an infinitely greater personal knowledge of the human sufferings and limitations that finally brought down the Bourbon monarchy than Voltaire ever had. Voltaire, as Lord Morley said, stood for eighteenth-century "curiosity, irreverence, intrepidity, vivaciousness, and rationality." He was the high-priest of knowledge and art. Voltaire was a rationalist, Rousseau was a sentimentalist, dreading knowledge, and believing that if man was to be happy he must not press forward but journey backward to primitive simplicity.

Never did a great writer live such a strange life as Jean-Jacques Rousseau—as Carlyle called him, "virtuous Jean-Jacques, evangelist of the Contrat Social." He was first

apprenticed to a notary, and then to an engraver. When he was sixteen he wandered away from home, professed conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, and became for a while a footman in Turin. Three years afterwards he settled down for a time, as "domestic lover" to the wealthy Madame de Warens at Annecy. Madame de Warens was a "kind of deist with a theory of libertinism tempered by good nature," who, among other things, paid for Rousseau to complete his education. Rousseau was a restless and ungracious lover, often wandering away from his benefactress, on one occasion attaching himself as secretary to a Greek archimandrite, on another teaching music, of which he knew very little, to a young lady. In 1741 Rousseau was in Paris endeavouring to persuade the Academy of Science to adopt a new system of musical notation which he had invented. Then he went to Venice as secretary to the French Ambassador, returning to Paris in 1745, associating with the literary group that centred round Diderot, and contributing to the *Encyclopædia.*

In 1749, when he was thirty-seven years old, he made his first literary success with an essay in which he developed his famous theory of the superiority of the savage over the civilised man. The essay was followed by the production of two plays, the success of which brought him a command to go to Court—and this command he characteristically disobeyed. He went back to Geneva in 1754, and once there confessed himself a Protestant. Two years afterwards he was again in Paris writing *La Nouvelle Héloise*—a sentimental novel clearly suggested by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*—and incidentally quarrelling with Diderot. Rousseau had a genius for quarrelling. Soon after his break with Diderot he published a pamphlet attacking Voltaire. For ten years Rousseau lived in prosperity in the neighbourhood of Paris, and during this period, besides *La Nouvelle Héloise,* his writings included the famous *Social Contract,* and his second novel *Émile,* which brought on his head the anger

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ROUGET DE L'ISLE SINGING "THE MARSEILLAISE"

After the painting by Pils, in the Louvre, Paris.

Here we have a scene which was the direct result of the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot. "La Marseillaise," the National Hymn of France, was written in 1792 by a young officer of Engineers, C. J. Rouget de L'Isle. The scene depicts de L'Isle singing his composition to a number of his friends. The song received the name by which it is now known from the fact of its having been sung by a party of Revolutionaries from Marseilles on their entry into Paris.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

LOUIS XVI AND FAMILY IN HIS PRISON IN THE TEMPLE

After E. M. Ward, R.A.

The painting depicts Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, whom he made his Queen, passing in prison what proved to be their last days on earth. It is a striking thought that this, and all the other great events of the Revolution, were, to some extent, hastened by the work of the writers mentioned in these pages.

both of the Court and of the Church. He was obliged hurriedly to leave France, going first to Switzerland and afterwards to Prussia, in neither of which countries he was made welcome. In 1766 he landed in England at the invitation of David Hume, Boswell escorting his wife from Paris. He soon tired of London's lionising, and stayed for some time in Wooton in Derbyshire, where he wrote a great part of his *Confessions.* Before the summer of 1767 he had quarrelled with Hume and was back again in Paris. He died in 1778, in the same year as Voltaire, having in his later years finished his *Confessions* and written his *Dialogues.* It seems probable that for the last ten years of his life Rousseau was not entirely sane. He was amazingly "touchy" and pitifully easily offended, having been born, as Hume said, "without a skin."

Most of our knowledge of Rousseau's private life has been learned from his own *Confessions,* in which with a candour unrivalled by anyone but Pepys, and without Pepys's ingenuous humour, he reveals himself without reticence or reservation. In 1743 he commenced his association with Thérèse la Vaseur, whom he married shortly before his death. She had been an inn servant, apparently without beauty, education, or intelligence, and was hopelessly vulgar and immoral. By her Rousseau had five children, all of whom, according to his own story, were consigned to the Foundling Hospital immediately after their birth.

There is little literary value either in *La Nouvelle Héloise* or in *Émile.* In the *Social Contract* Rousseau shows himself the disciple of Locke. He insists that the two most valuable things in life are Liberty and Equality.

The Bible of the Revolution

The opening words of his epoch-making work, *The Social Contract,* which, as Morley says, "sent such a thrill through the generations to which they were uttered in two continents," were

these, *"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."* Rousseau knew hardly any history, or he would have realised that man has been born free in few ages of the world. But he knew just enough to search back for his ideal free birth to those far-away times before man was civilised, and was therefore presumably unaffected and natural. The theory of the *Social Contract* is that all government should be based on the consent of the governed. The people are the sovereign, and the will of the people must be carried out by an executive authority chosen by them. The State in the eighteenth century was the King. It should be the people, and the one duty of the State should be to look after and educate all its citizens. The *Social Contract* was the gospel of the Jacobins, and Saint-Just and Robespierre moulded their legislative decrees on Rousseau's teaching.

His "Confessions"

Rousseau's literary power appears at its fullest in his *Confessions,* the most famous and surprising autobiography in all literature. Rousseau is his own hero. He declares: "I have ever thought and still think myself, considering everything, the best of men." He cheerfully admits his vices, but he believes that there is no human being who does not "conceal some odious vice"; comparatively he is an admirable individual, and he determines to reveal himself completely, believing that by showing himself in his true colours, less candid persons will feel that bad as he is they are really worse. Writing of the days in which he was apprenticed to a Geneva watchmaker, he says:

> Thus I learned to covet, dissemble, lie, and, at length, to steal, a propensity I never before felt the least inclination to, though since that time I have never been able entirely to divest myself of it. Unsatisfied desire led naturally to this vice, and this is the reason why pilfering is so common among footmen and apprentices, although the latter,

> as they grow up, and find themselves in a position where everything is at their command, lose this shameful propensity.

Though he is entirely pleased with himself, Rousseau is not given to vain boasting—he never exaggerates his skill as a musician, for example—and the self-revelation is fascinating because it is obviously sincere.

> My passions are extremely violent; while under their influence, nothing can equal my impetuosity. I am then an absolute stranger to discretion or decorum. I am rude, violent, and daring: no shame can stop, no danger intimidate me. My mind is frequently so engrossed by a single object, that beyond it the whole world is not worth a thought. I am all enthusiasm at one instant, and the next I am plunged into a state of despair. In my more temperate moments I am indolent and timid, and it becomes an intolerable labour for me to say or do anything.

One of the charms in the *Confessions* is the incidental descriptions of scenery and the often expressed joy in natural beauty. Love of Nature had before been expressed in poetry, but it was a new note not only in French prose but in the prose literature of Europe.

Rousseau has been well described by Professor Saintsbury as "A describer of the passions of the human heart and of the beauties of Nature. . . . He was the direct inspirer of the men who made the French Revolution, and the theories of his *Contrat Social* were closer at the root of Jacobin politics than any other. His fervid declamation about equality and brotherhood, and his sentimental republicanism, were seed as well suited to the soil in which they were sown as Montesquieu's reasoned constitutionalism was unsuited to it."

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XXIV

GOETHE, SCHILLER, AND LESSING

GOETHE, SCHILLER, AND LESSING

§ 1

GOETHE

A Great Man of Letters

WHEN, eight years after Goethe's death (in 1832), Carlyle delivered his lecture on the Hero as Man of Letters, he acclaimed him as the greatest, and said:

> "To that man there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; vision of the inward divine mystery: and strangely, out of his Books, the world rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God, illuminated all, not in fierce impure fire-splendour as of Mahomet, but in mild celestial radiance;—really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times; to my mind by far the greatest, though one of the quietest, among all the great things that have come to pass in them."

But having said this he turned abruptly from Goethe with the observation that the time was not ripe to talk at large about him to an English cultured audience. "Speak as I might, Goethe, to the great majority of you, would remain problematic, vague; no impression but a false one could be realised."

Since these words were uttered Goethe's appeal to English readers has steadily advanced. Its advance is figured in Matthew Arnold, accepted long after Carlyle's:

> When Goethe's death was told, we said:
> Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
> Physician of the iron age,
> Goethe has done his pilgrimage.

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
He looked on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life—
He said: *The end is everywhere;*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, or insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

Goethe, without being a Shakespeare, was cast in that mighty mould which we must call Shakespearean. He fell short of Shakespeare, and he was different from Shakespeare, who was, so to speak, a "ninth wave" breaking on our Elizabethan shores with the momentum of great seas behind him, whereas Goethe was virtually a first wave unsupported and unimpelled by tradition or racial inspiration. Shakespeare crowned English literature. Goethe founded German literature. No Chaucer, no Spenser, behind *him;* no long speech of his race; no great companions such as Shakespeare had; no air of poetry and national expression such as Shakespeare breathed. Naked, Goethe came into German literature; clothed in purple and fine linen of his own weaving he went out.

In 1914 there was an ignoble tendency to belittle Goethe, and to go back, so to speak, on all that we ever said or thought in his praise. As if true greatness does not survive the follies of men and their epileptic falls into strife and disorder! Mr. Edmund Gosse has recently written these monitory words:

> We must be careful to see that the natural prejudice which recent events have created, or emphasised, in our

> minds against German schools of thought does not extend to depriving us of the incomparable privilege of sunning ourselves in the broad light of Goethe.

He looked wisely and wistfully on English literature. He had formed himself in his first period on Shakespeare, and reverted later to his great model. He envied Scott. He admired Byron to distraction. He understood why Burns is great as well as anyone has understood it.

Goethe would have fought in the Napoleonic Wars if he had been of military age. He was reproached for not having even written war songs, and talking in his last year about this, he said to Eckermann:

> How could I write songs of hatred without hating! . . . Altogether, national hatred is something peculiar. You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent *above* nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people, as if it had happened to one's own. This degree of culture was conformable to my nature, and I had become strengthened in it long before I had reached my sixtieth year.

A passage worthy to be included in the breviary of the League of Nations.

Is this man to be neglected by us as German and remote, or severable from us by events and conditions which he never foresaw because they never belonged to his world? Can his "broad light" be overcast?

Influence of Goldsmith

One of the earliest and most profound impressions made on this mighty German was made by our own Oliver Goldsmith. The man who has so often been described as a self-absorbed

Olympian, contemplating the life of his fellowmen rather than sharing in it, and delivering messages too lofty for "human nature's daily food," said of *The Vicar of Wakefield* nearly sixty years after he had read it:

> It is not to be described, the effect that Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me, just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education; and in the end there are thoughts and feelings which have reclaimed us from all the errors of life.

It seems well thus to relate Goethe to ourselves, because it cannot be maintained that many English or American readers can face the huge task of reading his works in a German light, or of understanding them as a great German phenomenon and development. Much that he wrote has faded. Much will never fade.

Where, then, look for Goethe's "broad light," and how are we to "sun ourselves" in that light? Probably the best advice that can be given to readers in an age of hurry and of multiplying appeals to their attention is to read that wonderful record of Goethe's thoughts and table-talk, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret.* It is one of the most eye-opening and stimulating books in the world. The work was translated from the German a good many years ago by John Oxenford and published in the Bohn Library. Eckermann, when he met his master, was a young poet; Goethe was in his seventy-fourth year, and full of old experience and prophetic strain. Their friendship lasted until Goethe's death, nine years later, and the "Conversations" are the record of a great man's talk and a young man's discipleship.

An interesting element in these "Conversations" is Goethe's general literary advice to his young friend; it is as applicable to-day to young writers as it was a hundred years ago. Thus he urges Eckermann to found his poems on actual experiences, and to seek inspiration in realities—not in large and vague reflections. "I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air." Apprehend the individual is his counsel:

> While you content yourself with generalities everyone can imitate you; but in the particular no one can—and why? because no others have experienced exactly the same thing.

Goethe's mind was as practical as it was speculative, as critical as it was imaginative, and thus Eckermann's pages read like those of a super-commonplace book. Here you find Goethe discussing a classical medal; there, with the nicest learning, the art of making bows and arrows; or he is pointing out the beauty of a master's drawing, or developing his theory of colour, or expounding the value of inoculation—there is no end to his variety. Thus he discusses the fashion, beginning then, and rampant to-day, of putting quaint old furniture into modern houses.

From all these details of life Goethe continually returns to the highest and deepest subjects that can occupy man. Here is an observation which has a profound bearing on the present cult of spiritism:

> This occupation with the ideas of immortality is for people of rank, and especially ladies, who have nothing to do. But an able man, who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle and produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in this. Thoughts about immortality are also good for those who have not been successful here; and I would wager that, if the good Tiedge had enjoyed a better lot, he would also have had better thoughts.

And this is another of his deeper reflections:

> People treat it as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise, they would not say the *Lord God,* the *dear God,* the *good God.* This expression comes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought is attached whatever. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

Even these few quotations will indicate the range of a book in which the "broad light" of Goethe is suffused in every page.

§ 2

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was the son of an imperial councillor, and his birth-place was Frankfort-on-Maine in 1749. While a student his interests grew so broad that, Leonardo-like, during an outwardly very placid lifetime he produced countless essays on every branch of natural history, and monographs on a score of subjects ranging from law to religion; he made contributions to science that placed him among the forerunners of those great thinkers who have set forth the doctrine of evolution; and he painted pictures, worked at sculpture, managed a theatre, translated several famous works, including Goldsmith's *Deserted Village,* and as a critic prophesied the future of both Scott and Carlyle as he affirmed the splendour of Byron. His career has long been the best argument in the hands of those who believe a thoroughgoing, all-round culture to be necessary for the artist. Incidentally, he had many love affairs and attachments. Over eighteen are on record, and each of them left its mark on his character and his work.

Goetz with the Iron Hand, written under Shakespearean

influence, was published when he was twenty-four. Goethe next concentrated on a figure of limitless sensibility, and his *Sorrows of Werther,* a story published a year later, produced an almost unexampled sensation. It is based on an actual occurrence by which Goethe had recently been impressed, a young man named Jerusalem having shot himself in consequence of an unhappy attachment for a married lady. In Werther's distracted mind the thought of a similar suicide is developed very gradually from a skilfully dramatised incident, during which Werther is playing with the pistols of a friend, and idly presses the muzzle of one of them to his forehead. Countless readers put into the story their own exaggerated cravings, unsatisfied passions, and imaginary sorrows; and it has been said that suicides became quite fashionable from China to Peru, many being actually laid to the poor author's charge!

Within the next twelve years Goethe had completed three of his finest dramas, *Egmont, Iphigenia in Tauris,* and *Torquato Tasso*—dramas which it does not seem necessary to discuss here in detail.

"Faust"

An impressive characteristic of all Goethe's work is the length of time and the amount of labour he expended in bringing it to completion. His largest expenditure of time and labour went to the preparation of the two best-known masterpieces, for *Faust* was commenced as far back as 1773, when he was twenty-four, the first part of it being finally completed in 1806, the second not till 1831. *Wilhelm Meister,* his prose masterpiece, was begun four years after *Faust,* and was finished only three years before Goethe's death, its composition thus spreading over a period of fifty-two years, as against fifty-eight years in the case of *Faust!* But the second part of each of these works is inferior in every way to the first part. Indeed, the general reader is hardly aware that *Faust* does not conclude at that magnificent

moment in which is heard the choir of angels declaring triumphantly of the dying Margaret that, despite the machinations of Mephistopheles and the sin committed by her with Faust that engulfs herself, her mother, brother, and child, "She is saved": the moment that ends with the cry of the demon to Faust—"Hither to me!"—the most terrible cry in the whole range of supernatural literature.

The incidents leading to this great climax have been made familiar through countless versions of legends and story, one of the earliest to recognize tremendous possibilities in Dr. Faustus and his ultimate damnation being our own Christopher Marlowe. The legend of Faust goes back far. The story is that this magician, a native of Swabia, was left a fortune by his uncle. He wasted it in riotous living, pursued pleasure and did not find it. When he had spent all, instead of returning like the Prodigal to the haunts of peace and purity, he made a pact with the Devil that he might live his life of indulgence for twenty-four years, at the end of which period he would give up his body and soul to his great partner. On such a theme any great philosophical poet might build. Goethe is said to have received his first inspiration for his drama from a marionette performance in which Faust was beaten to death by the devil, much to the edification of all good Christians among the audience. There are thirty or forty translations of Goethe's *Faust* in English, and Bayard Taylor's rendering is to be recommended, for it is easily obtainable, and conveys the spirit and substance of the German original with admirable success. Margaret's song at the spinning-wheel, after her first meeting with Faust, may be quoted as a fair example of Taylor's work, and also as representing the exquisite tenderness of Goethe's lyric poetry:

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore;
I never shall find it,
Ah, nevermore! . . .

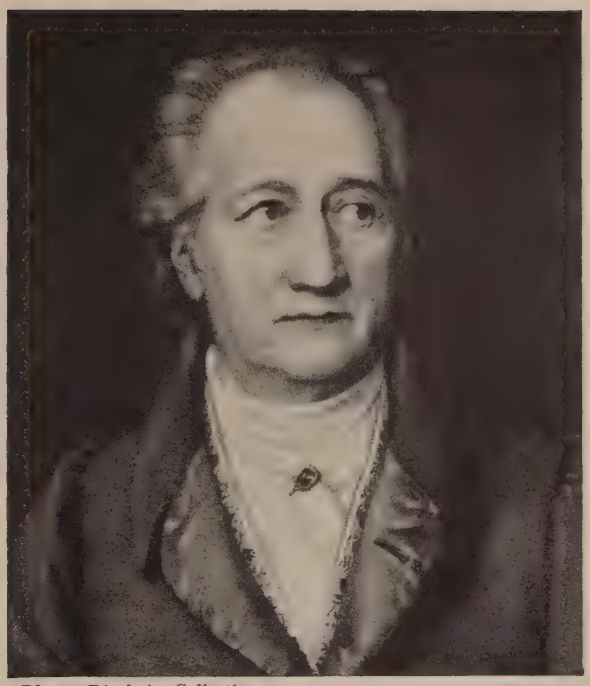

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

GOETHE, BY STIELER

Goethe is the greatest figure in German literature. He is known all the world over by his great drama *Faust*.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

THE MEETING OF FAUST AND MARGARET

From the painting by J. Tissot in the Luxembourg, Paris.

Faust: Fair lady, may I offer you my arm;
And will you suffer me to see you home?
Faust.

Photo: Anderson.

LAOCOON

The Vatican, Rome.

This famous piece of sculpture is now in the Vatican Museum, Rome. Lessing called his book *Laocoon* because it suited him to make the famous statue of Laocoon and his two sons being strangled by Jove-sent serpents (after Laocoon's warning to the Trojans not to receive the Wooden Horse) a test of what could be rightly done by a poet (Virgil) to describe it in words.

To see him, him only,
At the pane I sit;
To meet him, him only,
The house I quit.

Faust's answer to Margaret's inquiry as to his belief in God is an example of Goethe's power:

Who dare express Him?
And who profess Him,
Saying: "I believe in Him!"
Who, feeling, seeing, deny His being,
Saying: "I believe Him not!"
The All-enfolding, the All-upholding,
Folds and upholds he not thee, me, Himself!
Arches there not the sky above us?
Lies not beneath us, firm, the earth?
And rise not, on us shining,
Friendly, the everlasting stars?
Look I not, eye to eye, on thee,
And feel'st not, thronging
To head and heart, the force
Still weaving its eternal secret,
Invisible, visible, round thy life?
Vast as it is, fill with that force thy heart,
And when thou in the feeling wholly blessed art,
Call it, then, what thou wilt,—
Call it Bliss! Heart! Love! God!

Of *Faust,* G. H. Lewes has said:

> It appeals to all minds with the irresistible fascination of an eternal problem, and with the charm of endless variety. It has every element: wit, pathos, wisdom, farce, mystery, melody, reverence, doubt, magic, and irony: not a chord of the lyre is unstrung, not a fibre of the heart untouched. Students earnestly wrestling with doubt, striving to solve the solemn riddles of life, feel their pulses strangely agitated by this poem; and not students alone, but as Heine, with allowable exaggeration, says, every billiard-marker in

Germany puzzles himself over it. In *Faust* we see, as in a mirror, the eternal problem of our intellectual existence.

The student of *Faust* will find no lack of commentators to help him on his way. But none will be needed for the appreciation of the poetical beauties of Goethe's masterpiece—of the subtlety of its characterisations, of the glowing fancy which illumines so many passages, from the prologue in heaven down to the last thrilling prison scene, and of the charming lyrical pieces and songs with which the tragedy is interspersed.

Goethe's greatest novel, *Wilhelm Meister,* was begun in 1777. Next to *Faust* it is his chief work and contains the most of his philosophy of life. It is very long, and to some readers not a little wearisome. Goethe did not complete the last "book" of the story until 1829. The importance of *Wilhelm Meister* lies in the fact that it was the pioneer of the "novel with a purpose," and the first application of the novel to moral and cultural instruction. Its theme is the importance of a man's choosing his vocation aright.

The pictures in *Wilhelm Meister* of German life and society are done with great skill. None but the author of *Faust* could have written it; for not only does *Wilhelm Meister* show the general advance of man from immaturity to perfection of intellect and life-culture, but the sequel (*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings*) is very closely related to the second part of *Faust,* in which the erstwhile pawn of Mephistopheles flings from him his first unhappy environment and advances through all forms of culture, statesmanship, science, art, and war, to the final and simple wisdom of disinterested service rendered to his fellow-men.

For Goethe's pure wisdom the English reader may go to his *Maxims and Reflections,* translated by Mr. Bailey Saunders. They are in four sections: "Life and Character," "Literature and Art," "Science," and "Nature." They are not epigrams, nor have they the polish and neatness of the French *pensée.* As

Mr. Saunders says, it is depth and truth and sanity of observation that marks these registrations of Goethe's thoughts: "it is no concern of his to dazzle the mind by the brilliancy of his wit; nor does he labour to say things because they are striking, but only because they are true." We may well take leave of Goethe by quoting some of these pearls of wisdom.

> How can a man come to know himself? Never by thinking, but by doing. Try to do your duty, and you will know at once what you are worth.
>
> The most insignificant man can be complete if he works within the limits of his capacities, innate and acquired; but even fine talents can be obscured, neutralised, and destroyed by lack of the indispensable requirement of symmetry. This is a mischief which will often occur in modern times; for who will be able to come up to the claims of an age so full and intense as this, and one, too, that moves so rapidly?
>
> It is a great error to take oneself for more than one is, or for less than one is worth.
>
> Character calls forth character.
>
> I keep silence about many things, for I do not want to put people out of countenance; and I am well content if they are pleased with things that annoy me.
>
> Piety is not an end, but a means: a means of attaining the highest culture by the purest tranquillity of soul.
>
> Whoso is content with pure experience and acts upon it has enough of truth. The growing child is wise in this sense.
>
> Certain minds must be allowed their peculiarities.
>
> Everyone has his peculiarities and cannot get rid of them; and yet many a one is destroyed by his peculiarities, and those, too, of the most innocent kind.
>
> A state of things in which every day brings some new trouble is not the right one.

Soon after the first meeting of Goethe and Schiller, which took place in 1794, the two poets engaged in a bout of friendly

rivalry which they christened "A Year of Ballads," composing many pieces one against the other. The ballads that Schiller composed were superior to the majority of Goethe's, and although he can hardly be accounted as of the front rank of lyric poets, Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller is second to none in German dramatic poetry. Not only is he the best-loved, the favourite poet among his own people of this day, but his position is high among the world's writers of dramatic verse.

§ 3

SCHILLER

Schiller was born in 1759 at Marbach, ten years later than his friend, and he endured a life of poverty and ill-health very bravely, pursuing in turn the labours of a surgeon, an editor, a theatre-manager, and a professor of history. The main result of his own *Sturm und Drang* period had been his arrest and flight into hiding from the tyrannous Duke Carl Eugen; therefore the friendship of Goethe, that commenced when Schiller was thirty-five, was like a gift of balm from heaven.

A Close Friendship

Under the stimulus of his new friendship Schiller completed the work which Carlyle declares to have been the "greatest dramatic writing of which the eighteenth century can boast," despite the fact that its author's health was so bad that every hour at his desk cost him several hours' suffering. This work is a trilogy, consisting of *Wallenstein's Camp, The Two Piccolomini,* and *Wallenstein's Death,* the last-named having been translated by Coleridge.

A direct result of the contact with Goethe was the writing of *William Tell,* Schiller's most famous drama, and the last he lived to finish. He had composed in quick succession his dramatic portraits of Mary Stuart and Joan of Arc, about which time

Photo: Hanfstaengl.

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

His two most famous dramas were *William Tell* and *The Robbers.* The Germans regard him as the next greatest poet to Goethe.

Photo: B. P. C.

MARGARET IN THE CHURCH

Margaret: That I were out of this!
I feel as if the organ
Stifled my breathing,
And that the anthem was
Breaking my heart.
Faust.

MEPHISTOPHELES AND FAUST

After the etching by Edmund J. Sullivan.

Mephistopheles: A stratagem, perhaps, may gain
The fortress. *Faust.*

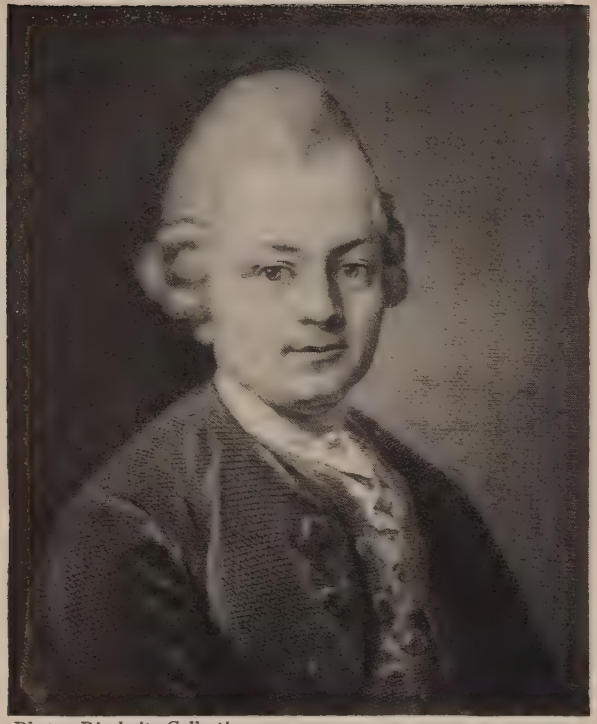

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

G. E. LESSING

A pioneer of the Modern German study of Greek literature and a champion of Shakespeare, it may be said that Lessing did much to foster that admiration for the Plays of Shakespeare which is now so strong a characteristic of the German people.

Photo: Wehrli, Zurich.

TELL'S FLIGHT

From a Frieze in Tell's Chapel.

The scene illustrates William Tell escaping during a storm from the boat in which he was being conveyed as a prisoner by Gessler.

Goethe was planning to write an epic dealing with the partly legendary, partly actual hero of the Swiss Revolution, William Tell, who is ordered by the tyrant Gessler to shoot an apple from his little son's head or, if he should aim wrongly, die. But Goethe's scheme came to naught, and Schiller, fired by their many talks on the subject, resolved to take over the theme and treat it dramatically. The result was a noble one. The play was rapturously received throughout Germany, crystallising as it did the national aspiration towards freedom. Goethe staged it at Weimar, and Weber offered to set it to music. One of the most thrilling moments of the play follows immediately on Tell's triumph over the terrible ordeal with the arrow and the apple. The baffled Gessler notices a second arrow in Tell's belt, and demands an explanation:

> TELL (*confused*). It is a custom with all archers, sir.
> GESSLER. No, Tell, I cannot let that answer pass.
> There was some other motive, well I know.
> Frankly and freely let me have the truth:—
> Whate'er it be, I promise thee thy life.
> Wherefore the second arrow?
> TELL. Well, then, my lord,
> Since you have promised not to take my life,
> I will, without reserve, declare the truth.
> (*He draws the arrow from his belt, and fixes the governor with a terrible look.*)
> If that my hand had struck my darling child,
> This second arrow should have pierced your heart.
> And be assured, I should not then have missed!

Goethe and Schiller formed the habit of sending greetings to each other on the first day of the new year. On January 1, 1805, Goethe inadvertently wrote in his letter the phrase, "the last year." He rewrote the note, but again the phrase appeared. With a shudder of presentiment he said, "I feel that for one of us this is the last year." And, true enough, ere half its course was run Schiller was dead. At the news the great, calm Goethe

broke down completely. "He covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a woman. For days no one dared mention Schiller's name in his presence." He never spoke of Schiller's "death"; it was always "When I lost him." And once in a letter he wrote, "The half of my existence has gone from me."

Goethe survived his friend by twenty-seven years. His own death, at the age of eighty-three, with honours thick upon him, was as serene as his life had been. The end came, we read, while he was seated in his armchair, with his daughter-in-law holding his hand in hers. Half-an-hour previously he had asked that the shutters might be opened to let the day enter. Often since that event, which Matthew Arnold celebrated in one of his most noble poems, has it been remarked how characteristic it was that he who had been the great "light-bringer" of his age should conclude his own pilgrimage with the prayer that began it—"Licht! mehr licht!"—"Light! more light!"

§ 4

LESSING

Goethe's supremacy in German creative literature has its counterpart in Lessing's supremacy in German criticism. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born in 1729, and was therefore Goethe's senior by twenty years. His early life was that of a student at Leipzig and Berlin. He had been destined for the Church, but his genius ran to the cultivation of his taste and its correction by the highest standards. He was early attracted to the stage and to the history of the theatre. In 1750 he published his *History of the Theatre,* and five years later his tragedy, *Miss Sara Sampson,* which influenced Germany by its abandonment of French dramatic conventions in favour of the much wider freedom of English drama. Various critical literary studies came from his pen which need not be named. His *Dramatic Notes* are of high importance still. Developing his

attack on French classical tragedy, he reasoned that Greek drama and Shakespeare were the true models for German dramatic art to follow. Lessing was, in fact, the founder of the immense German appreciation of Shakespeare.

"Laocoon"

Laocoon was published in 1766. In its kind, it was the greatest work published in the eighteenth century. It was an original and masterly inquiry into the principles of criticism as they are founded on the history of human expression. It is not too much to say that it made Goethe and Schiller possible. Goethe himself said: "One must be a youth in order to realise the effect produced upon us by Lessing's *Laocoon,* which transported us from the region of miserable observation into the free fields of thought."

What Lessing did was to lay down, in masterly fashion, a distinction which is eternal but which had been much obscured in his age—the distinction, or rather the difference between the functions of poetry and the plastic arts (Sculpture and Painting).

Lessing called his book *Laocoon* because it suited him to make the famous statue of Laocoon and his two sons being strangled by Jove-sent serpents (after Laocoon's warning to the Trojans not to receive the Wooden Horse) a test of what could rightly be done in sculpture to represent agony in marble, as against what could be rightly done by a poet (Virgil) to describe it in words. The statue was no more than a text, but because it was his text he made it his title. His point is that sculpture and painting cannot do, and rightly refrain from doing, what can be done by the poet.

In exploring this difference of principle, Lessing illuminates all criticism. It is impossible to read *Laocoon* without seeing and feeling in every page his honesty of thought. He never dogmatises. He gives its due to every argument contrary to his

own view, and this so fairly as almost to weaken his own thesis in the eyes of readers who want strong writing and anvil-like blows of conclusion. But this was wholly characteristic of Lessing, who thought and wrote:

> If God were to hold in his *right* hand all Truth, and in his *left* hand the single ever-active impulse to seek after Truth, even though with the condition that I must eternally remain in error, and say to me, "Choose," I would with humility fall before his *left* hand and say, "Father, give! For pure thoughts belong to Thee alone!"

These are noble words, and Goethe must surely have had them in mind when he wrote of Lessing: "Only one equally great could understand him; to mediocrity he was dangerous."

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XXV

WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, AND BLAKE

WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, AND BLAKE

§ 1

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The Poet of Healing

"I FIRMLY believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time." Thus wrote Matthew Arnold more than forty years ago, and thus, we may be sure, he would write were he alive to-day. But more memorable, because more explicit, is his tribute in "Memorial Verses," written in 1850 under the emotion he felt at Wordsworth's death:

> He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
> He laid us as we lay at birth
> On the cool flowery lap of earth,
> Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
> The hills were round us, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Ah! since dark days still bring to light
> Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
> Time may restore us in his course
> Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
> But when will Europe's latter hour
> Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

When, thirty years later, Arnold made his "Selections" from Wordsworth's poetry, and prefaced them with a critical essay, he remarked that since the year 1842 Tennyson had drawn the poetry-reading public from Wordsworth, and that it was still permitted to tenth-rate critics and compilers to speak of Wordsworth's poetry with ignorance, even with impertinence. He perceived that its abundance, and the inferiority of two-thirds of it to his best, had lowered the fame of a poet who will be ranked, in the end, above Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Cowper, Burns, Shelley, and Keats. But as this hour had not come it seemed to Arnold that it would be good to give the public only the best work of Wordsworth in his "Selections." This he did.

The "Selections" is still the best introduction to a poet whom many people read with difficulty or tedium because they do not read his poems as they are written—broodingly. They want quick results, immediate thrills, and tunes which they can easily remember. Wordsworth cannot be known thus. His poetry represents sixty years of meditation and communion with Nature and Human Nature. He has to be approached along his own paths, and through moods and ways of thought akin to his own. He is difficult to read "at sight," but, read with insight, he is supreme in his sphere. John Morley, writing in 1888, said of Wordsworth:

> By his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, he has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, with inner moods of settled peace, to touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.

William Wordsworth died in 1850 as Poet Laureate under Queen Victoria. This fact has long kept alive in the public mind a certain illusion concerning his true period. For he lived to be eighty. He was born fourteen years before the death of

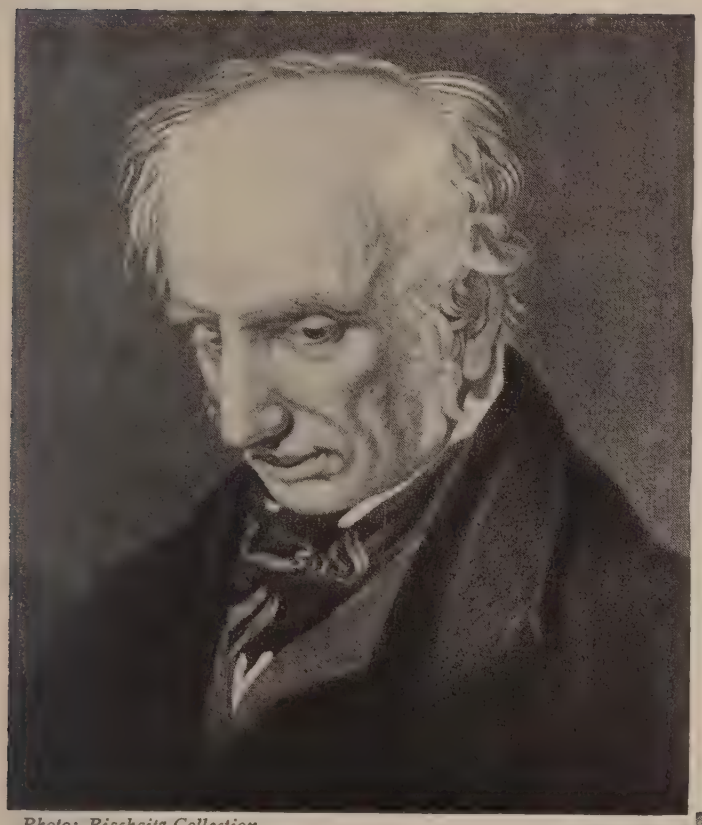


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, BY R. B. HAYDON

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

WILLIAM WATSON: *Wordsworth's Grave.*

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH, THE POET'S SISTER

The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares and delicate fears,
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

The above lines were written in 1801, when Wordsworth and his sister had settled at Townend, Grasmere.

Copyright photo: R. A. Malby.

DAFFODILS

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

WORDSWORTH.

Dr. Johnson. Gray had been dead only a year; Goldsmith had four years to live. He was born twenty-two years before Shelley, eighteen years before Byron, and a quarter of a century before Keats. He was a boy when England lost her American Colonies, but he was a virile and vigilant man when the French Revolution shook Europe, and he was in full maturity when the Industrial Age of England set in. And Morley describes his individual life in a very few words when he says:

> During all the tumult of the great war which for so many years bathed Europe in fire, through all the throes and agitations in which peace brought forth the new time, Wordsworth for half a century (1799-1850) dwelt sequestered in unbroken composure and steadfastness in his chosen home amid the mountains and lakes of his native region, working out his own ideal of the high office of the Poet.

To his "chosen" home he was both physically and spiritually native. His father was a Cockermouth attorney, and estate-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. His mother came of old Lakeland stock.

Early Years

His school-days at Cockermouth and Penrith were somewhat unfruitful of progress, but they were happy. He was a great reader, and devoured all Fielding's works, *Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Gulliver's Travels,* and the *Arabian Nights.* "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up, fostered alike by beauty and by fear." No man whose boyhood was dreamful and contemplative can read without emotion and understanding Wordsworth's statements in "The Prelude" of his early feelings. Invoking the "Wisdom of the Spirit of the Universe" he says:

> Not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn

Of childhood, didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul.

Not seldom, we feel, he recaptures the very air that was in his boyhood's nostrils and the thoughts that were then enlarging his inheritance of life; as in the lines in which he describes his sport on frozen lake or river:

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange light of evening died away.

Note the spiritual essence in this perfect inventory of the hour and scene.

At seventeen Wordsworth went to Cambridge. In "The Prelude" he tells us a great deal more about his college vacations than about his college life, but his picture of a certain ash-tree near his rooms stands out:

Often have I stood
Footbound uplooking at this lovely tree
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers,
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights,
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

Of Wordsworth's daily life in London, after Cambridge, we know little more than he tells us in the seventh book of "The Prelude." He seems to have been a lonely and observant wan-

derer in its streets, and never to have lost for a moment the sense of the city's relation to the country or of its intensity and traffic of life to the large peace of Nature. As F. W. H. Myers says, he became the poet not of London considered as London, but of London considered as a part of the country. Hence it was that a few years later, in giving one of the greatest of sonnets to our literature, he paid to London the noblest of tributes, and one in which his own spirit is for ever contained. It is the sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802":

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty;
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
> The river glideth at his own sweet will:
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The Story of Annette

To this early period belongs an episode in Wordsworth's life which for a very long time after his death was entirely unknown and unsuspected by his biographers. It can no longer be ignored, for it is known, and, being known, its influence on the poet's character and on some of his deepest work cannot be doubted even if it can be only doubtfully traced. Full-blooded and haunted by a poet's dreams, careless of his university career, and inclined to procrastinate thoughts of a future one, Wordsworth crossed to France for the second time in November, 1792, when he was about twenty-two years of age. He was an orphan, and

his head was raised to inhale the wind of life. "The best of life," says Byron, "is but intoxication," and there seems to be no doubt that Wordsworth was intoxicated by his freedom to see and study the world, and by impulses which, high as they were, did not exclude those of the senses. He had the means to stay in France only a few months, but he lived from day to day. Such was the somewhat turbulent young man who arrived in Orleans by coach or diligence at the end of 1791 and found board and lodgings at eighty francs a month. It was in his search for quarters, apparently, that he met the Vallon family. Almost at once he fell in love with Annette, one of the four daughters who were living in the family house whence the father had gone to his grave and the mother to another husband. Annette, also, was an orphan. It was a dangerous situation for both, as the event proved. Wordsworth's daughter was born on December 15, 1792.

His failure to marry Annette is best ascribed to his entire inability to support her and their child, at any rate until he had squared accounts with his guardians, to whom confession must be made. From that moment the tides of circumstance moved Wordsworth and Annette slowly but surely apart. War between England and France had long threatened and soon broke out. Dorothy Wordsworth took up her brother's case with his guardians, who, however, turned coldly away. She wrote tenderly to Annette, who responded most generously. She and her family were in danger of the guillotine during the Terror, and Wordsworth himself could go to France only under deadly peril. Annette longed for his return, and for marriage, chiefly that her position might be regularised and that little Caroline, who had been removed from her immediate care, might be all hers again. There are gaps in the story, and it is not absolutely certain whether Wordsworth dared the adventure or not.

He was coming under those influences which were in line with his genius and his opening career as a poet. He had settled down to cottage life with his sister. He had entered into poetic

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DOVE COTTAGE, GRASMERE

The cottage occupied for seven years by Wordsworth and afterwards by De Quincey, now national property, and preserved as a Wordsworth memorial.

Photo: Valentine.

GRASMERE FROM RED BANK

For nearly half a century Wordsworth resided beside the little lake he has made so famous.

Photo: Valentine.

TINTERN ABBEY

One of the most beautiful ruined abbeys of England. Associated with Wordsworth's great poem "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey."

partnership with Coleridge, with whom he was preparing those "Lyrical Ballads" which were to be the foundation-stone of his poetic life. He alleviated his remorse by turning it into narrative poems in which his own situation was not revealed, but in which it is legible now. Not only so, but he had become a passionate lover of England's beauty and of all things English. His thoughts even wandered back to his youthful love, the dead "Lucy."

Annette was a Frenchwoman, with no English speech. He soon forgot the little French he had known, and even Dorothy could poke a little fun at Annette's pleasure over the wedding of Wordsworth's daughter. Neither Wordsworth nor Dorothy were present. We wish we had some evidence that Wordsworth ever contributed to the support of Annette or Caroline.

The story, as has been said, cannot be ignored now that it is fully known. It flickers not seldom in the depths of Wordsworth's poetry; it cannot but have given him lifelong knowledge of the human heart.

This was the one "drama," to use the word in a modern and not too healthy way, behind Wordsworth's great mission as poet and prophet. On the lakes of Grasmere and Rydal he lived for half a century, drawing from Nature her deepest lessons, and transmitting these to all who would sit still and read.

§ 2

"Tintern Abbey"

Matthew Arnold says truly that nearly all his first-rate work was completed by the year 1808, when Byron had only just published his youthful "Hours of Idleness," when Scott had published nothing in poetry beyond "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and when Tennyson was yet unborn. The essence of all Wordsworth's message from Nature to Man is found in a poem which appeared so early as 1798 in that collaborative volume, *Lyrical Ballads,* which opened with "The Ancient

Mariner," and ended with Wordsworth's "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey." This poem is named by Myers as "the consecrated formulary of Wordsworthian faith." There is, indeed, nothing to be learned about the quality and direction of Wordsworth's poetry that is not in this poem. Already he knew the valley of the Wye and had received from it undying impressions and sentiments.

> Five years have past; five summers . . .
> and again I hear
> These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
> With a soft inland murmur.

In this poem we learn the distinction between mere moralising in verse and great poetry about the conduct of life. Wordsworth was never so great as when he drew vast suggestions direct from Nature and abandoned direct teaching and preaching. And yet of him it has been truly and finally said by Lord Morley, "He is a teacher, or he is nothing." Only he taught best when he saw through the transfusion of Nature's calm and order into Man's perplexed and disordered world. Consider these lines from "Tintern Abbey." He is recalling his earlier impressions of the same scenes as he had treasured them in many wanderings of body and spirit:

> . . . Oft, in lonely rooms and 'mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood and felt along the heart;
> And passing even into my purer mind
> With tranquil restoration: feelings too
> Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
> As have no slight or trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life,
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

Photo: Fredk. Hollyer.

THE HAPPY WARRIOR

After the painting by G. F. Watts.

"And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause.
This is the Happy Warrior."

It is possible that G. F. Watts was to some extent inspired by Wordsworth's lines on "The Happy Warrior" when he painted this picture in the year 1884. We know that [illegible] on the brow, but it may be noticed that Wordsworth's poem and this picture by Watts [illegible]

But this is not all:

> Nor less, I trust,
> To them I may have owed another gift,
> Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of the human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the *life of things.*

But even now we have not touched the height of spirituality to which Wordsworth rises from the banks of the Wye to the things which are eternal and the same.

> I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

Wordsworth, himself, rooted in Nature, drawing his *ichor,* so to speak, from earth and sky, has no use for the moralist who begins with morals. He thinks of him as

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
  Nor form, nor feeling, great or small;
A reasoning self-sufficient thing,
  An intellectual All-in-All.

Not to the moralist, but to another kind of teacher, he points us:

He is retired as noontide dew,
  Or fountain in a shady grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
  He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
  Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
  Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
  Some random truths he can impart;—
The harvest of a quiet eye
  That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

"The Happy Warrior"

There is a beautiful consistency and oneness in Wordsworth's message. Who but the author of the lines just quoted could have drawn the portrait of the "Happy Warrior"?—

Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care;
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain.

. . . . . .

Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
But who, if he be called upon to face

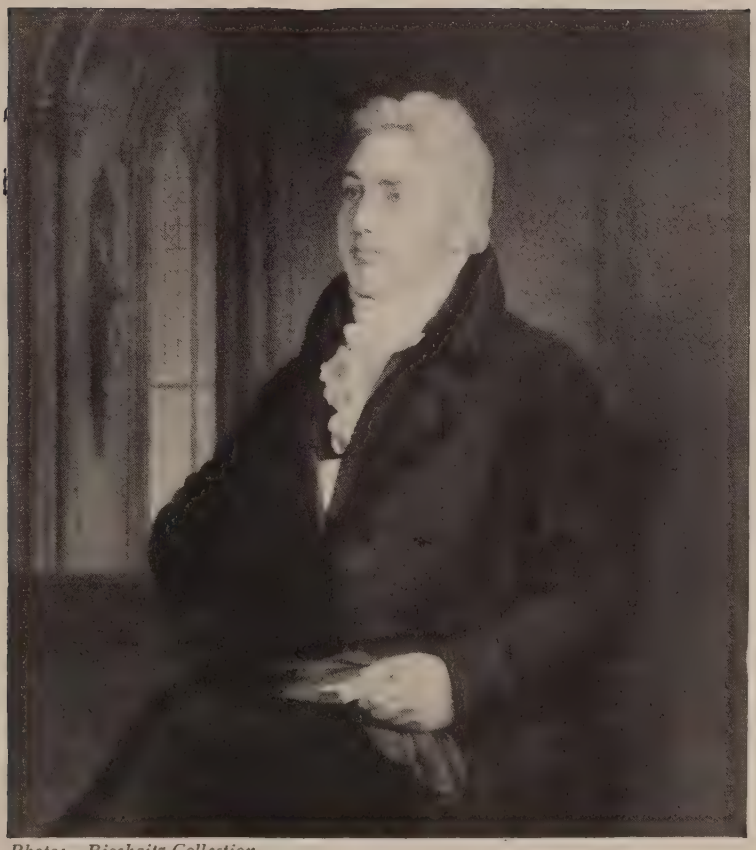
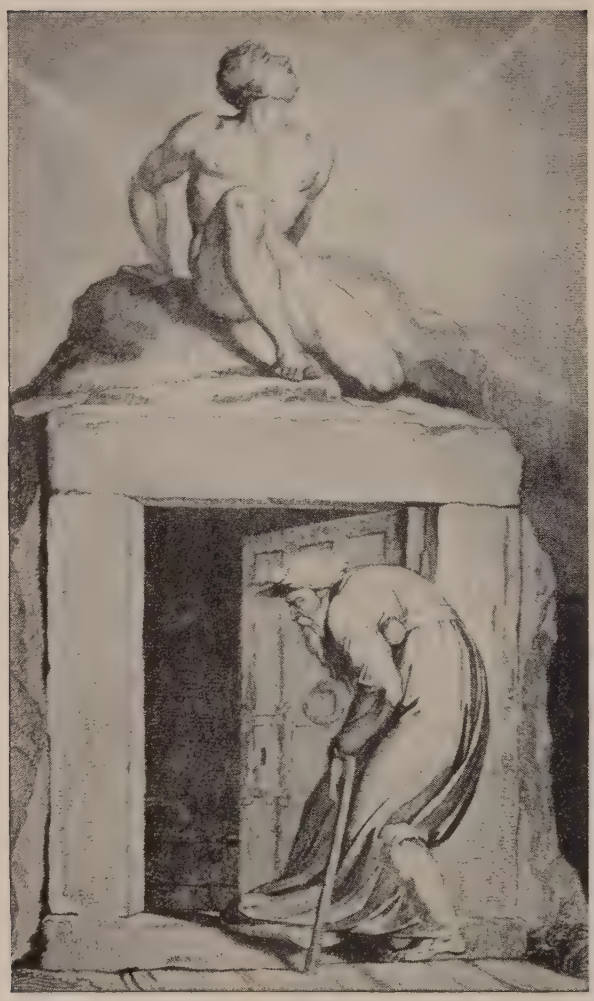


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

After Allston.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

Coleridge was endowed with an intellect of the first order and an imagination at once delicate and splendid. His addiction to opium so impaired his health that it can hardly be disputed that in most of his work Coleridge fell far short of his powers.



DEATH'S DOOR: FROM BLAIR'S "GRAVE"

An illustration of Blake's drawing reproduced from an engraving, by L. Schiavonetti.

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"THE ANCIENT MARINER"

"It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three."

. . . . .

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The wedding-guest stood still,
And listens like a three-years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

It is of interest to note that the last four lines quoted above, though appearing in *The Ancient Mariner*, were actually written by Wordsworth.

Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
Is happy as a lover; and attired
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.

. . . . . .

—He who though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
Are at his heart; and such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love.

. . . . . .

And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:
This is the Happy Warrior; this is he
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

Or who but he could have exclaimed?—

My heart leaps up when I behold
A Rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began:
So is it now I am a Man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!

The child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Or have thus meditated?—

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

. . . . . .

From Heaven if this belief be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

And when Wordsworth speaks of Duty, from what source does he draw inspiration? From the flowers that laughingly live through warm hours and the stars that wheel through chill eternities:

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong;
And the most ancient Heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

From such sanctions there is no appeal, for they are above argument, sectarianism, and variable definition.

§ 3

Poems of Solitude

Wordsworth is often, perhaps most often, greatest as a teacher when he tells simple stories like those of *Michael* (a poem which it is impossible to read without some change of heart or some confirmation in goodness), *Ruth, The Leech Gatherer, Simon Lee,* or *Margaret;* or when he blends reflection with the contemplation of a noble or stricken man or woman, as in the *Highland Girl,* the *Solitary Reaper,* or *Matthew.* His poetry is the harvest of solitude. In all his great work you meet a man

who is going out to find prophecies in the shaking of a reed and in the light of setting suns:

> Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
> Though home or shelter he had none,
> With such a sky to lead him on?

It is true, also, that this poetry, produced in solitude, requires withdrawal in its readers. No doubt man needs wisdom and caution in following this, or any other, path to the highest things; yet there are few men and women of character who would not say that the most precious and memorable moments in their lives have, in fact, been those in which they were alone with Nature, and in that mood of "wise passiveness," which Wordsworth teaches us to cultivate.

He went to Nature, not to decorate his thoughts, but to find them. He went, not to make literary patterns, but to "see into the life of things." His closest descriptions are suffused with meditation and wistfulness. One may instance that wonderful landscape in the poem composed *Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty,* in 1818:

> No sound is uttered,—but a deep
> And solemn harmony pervades
> The hollow vale from steep to steep,
> And penetrates the glades.
> Far distant images draw nigh,
> Called forth by wondrous potency
> Of beamy radiance, that imbues
> Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues!
> In vision exquisitely clear,
> Herds range along the mountain side;
> And glistening antlers are descried,
> And gilded flocks appear.
> Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!
> But long as god-like wish or hope divine
> Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
> That this magnificence is wholly thine!

—From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread!

This is man's sempiternal homage to Nature; and the language, though magnificent, is that of the common heart, unjewelled, unfermented, unspoilt by egotisms. It is the language of great poetry—a poetry which continually reminds us that Man, who knew not how to live in Eden, has still to learn to live outside it. Its subject is that core of peace and worship, within each of us, around which all our passions and struggles whirl.

For many years Wordsworth reaped little or no profit from his poetry, being completely overshadowed in public favour by Byron and Scott. But his fame increased with a bound between 1830 and 1840. In 1837 it crossed the Atlantic and an American edition of his poems appeared. In 1843, on the death of Southey, he received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain offering him the Poet Laureateship. This he at first declined, but on being pressed to accept it by Sir Robert Peel, who told him that the Queen fully approved of the appointment as "justly due to the first of living poets," he gave way. He had already received, also, an annuity of £300 from the Civil List. His tranquil life at his beloved Rydal Mount continued until the end, which came, as the result of a cold and induced pleurisy, on April 23, 1850. He rests in Grasmere churchyard, among the people he loved and the hills and lakes that had been his lifelong joy and inspiration.

§ 4

COLERIDGE

Private Comberback

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in 1772, his father being vicar of Ottery St. Mary, and like Lamb, became a Bluecoat

Photo: Henry Dixon & Son.

CHRISTABEL AND GERALDINE

From the picture exhibited in the Royal Academy by A. C. Cooke.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"

COLERIDGE: *Christabel.*

Reproduced by permission of George A. Macmillan, Esq.

RICHARD III AND THE GHOSTS OF HIS VICTIMS

An example of the work of William Blake.

When only fourteen years of age Blake was apprenticed to James Basire, an eminent engraver, and thereafter studied at the Royal Academy. In his art, as in his writings, Blake expressed himself as a mystic, a poet, and a visionary.

boy. He won a scholarship at Jesus College, Cambridge, but at the expiration of two years, for some mysterious reason, he ran away to London, where he loafed aimlessly about the streets, and ended by enlisting in the Light Dragoons as Private Comberback. One day it happened that two officers were discussing a quotation from Eusebius, when the private, overhearing them, suggested the true reading. The officers, as much astonished as if their dog had barked in Greek, drew out of him his story and communicated with his friends. And so the learned private left the Army.

He soon after joined his friend Southey, who lived at Bristol, where they were married to two sisters. And now Coleridge began his life as a free writer. He put forth in profusion prose and poetry alike; he started various periodicals, which shone like bubbles, and as quickly burst. With Wordsworth, he conceived and published the epoch-making little volume *Lyrical Ballads,* in which, as his own share, appeared *The Ancient Mariner* and three other poems. This great romantic poem was written in 1797, in which year, he then being twenty-five, he produced a number of the poems which have made his name as great as that of Shelley, Keats, or Wordsworth, though these exquisite creations do not muster more than twenty when their utmost tale is told. The chief of these are *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel, Kubla Khan, Youth and Age, The Ode to France,* and *Dejection.* All are marked by a peculiar faultless music all their own, sweet as the singing of the blessed spirits which the mariner heard upon the ship of terror:

> And now 'tis like all instruments,
> Now like a lonely flute,
> And now it is an angel's song
> That makes the heavens be mute.

The second quality of these poems is their new and deep expression of the magic of romance. Let us take a few lines—almost any lines—from *Christabel:*

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arm beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,

That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

Or we may choose the end of *Kubla Khan*—a poem presumed to have been written in an opium-dream:

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

The poems we have mentioned form a kind of nosegay of resplendent blossoms, among which peep forth some lesser buds

and bells of equal sweetness. Such is the little song, a translation:

I asked my fair one happy day
What I should call her in my lay;
  By what sweet name from Rome or Greece;
Lalage, Neæra, Chloris,
Sappho, Lesbia, or Doris,
  Arethusa or Lucrece.

"Ah!" replied my gentle fair,
"Beloved, what are names but air?
  Choose thou whatever suits the line;
Call me Sappho, call me Chloris,
Call me Lalage or Doris,
  Only, only call me Thine."

There is a certain interest in Coleridge's critical writing, chiefly in the *Biographia Literaria,* which contains the best discussion we yet have of Wordsworth's theories of poetry, but most of his prose has little value. But as for the tiny bulk of poetry which has made his name immortal, the authority of Swinburne is decisive:

> As a poet, his place is indisputable: it is high among the highest of all time. The highest lyric work is either passionate or imaginative. Of passion Coleridge has nothing; but for height and perfection of imaginative quality he is the greatest of lyric poets. This is his special power and this is his special praise.

Drift

His later life was melancholy. As a relief from bodily pain he resorted to opium, and by his thirtieth year was under fearful slavery. His marriage brought him a brief happiness, but he drifted helplessly away from his wife and children (Southey supporting them thereafter), just as earlier he had drifted away from his occupation as a Unitarian preacher, and then from

poetry. His closing years were an orgy of talk, so that his inspiration was dried up at its source. Keats wrote of him after their one meeting:

> I walked with him, at his alderman-after-dinner pace, for near two Miles, I suppose. In these two miles he broached a thousand things. Let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales—Poetry—on Poetical sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied with a sense of touch—single and double touch—a dream related—First and second consciousness—the difference explained between will and Volition—so say mathematicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's belief too much diluted—a Ghost story—Good morning—I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I heard all the interval—if it may be called so.

And Charles Lamb gives an amusing, imaginary description of how, when Coleridge had buttonholed him on one occasion and, with eyes closed, began to talk "for talking's sake," he found himself unable to get away on some urgent errand; therefore he stealthily snipped off the button, coming back five hours later to find Coleridge still talking, with eyes closed and holding the button in his outstretched fingers! Coleridge died at Highgate on July 25, 1834.

§ 5

SOUTHEY

Robert Southey, born in 1774, was the son of a Bristol draper, but he was educated at Westminster School and Balliol, Oxford. He settled at Keswick, and turned out, during a long life, a vast mass of literary work of every imaginable kind. His poems, however, did not reach a level which calls for any lengthy

comment. Not the least of them is *The Battle of Blenheim*, with the shattering irony of the lines:

"And everybody praised the duke
Who this great fight did win."
"And what good came of it at last?"
Quoth little Peterkin.
"Why, that I cannot tell," said he,
"But 'twas a famous victory."

The Cataract of Lodore is a *tour de force* and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths,* a fine piece of narrative, though redundant, which contains this charming vignette:

And when she stoopt
Hot from the chase to drink, well pleased had seen
Her own bright crescent, and the brighter face
It crowned, reflected there.

But the lines written in his library are his finest:

My days among the Dead are past;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
  My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
  Through all Futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

The Life of Nelson

Southey's best work is in the published *Letters,* in the classic *Life of Nelson,* and in *The Doctor,* a rambling miscellany valued by many readers above all his other work. The theme of this delightful bedside book is the story of Daniel Dove and his horse Nobbs, which he first heard from Coleridge. Its humour lay in making it as long as possible. Southey packs into it all his odds and ends of learning, besides a love-story, and the immortal nursery-tale, told well for the first time, of *The Three Bears.* When Scott refused the poet laureateship in 1813 he recommended Southey for it, and this honour lifted a kindly and earnest man of letters to a position he did not quite deserve. A little time before his death his mind gave way, and yet his life was a busy, happy one.

§ 6

HOOD

After Southey came Thomas Hood, born in 1798, the son of a London bookseller, whose *Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs* are realism presented romantically, and whose *Dream of Eugene Aram* is a romantic masterpiece of horror, achieving by realistic methods a fine evil glamour. He earned a livelihood by what one critic has called "the broken-hearted jesting of a sick buffoon," for Hood died of consumption at a comparatively early age. But he was also one of the great technical experts in English verse, using the double and treble rhyme-endings with unprecedented facility:

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

He also wrote some faultless lyrics as well as some very fine and noble serious verse. Of the first kind are the lines *Fair Ines:*

O, saw ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down
And rob the world of rest.

Such, also, is the ballad:

It was not in the Winter
Our loving lot was cast;
It was the Time of Roses,—
We plucked them as we passed,

That churlish season never frowned
On early lovers yet:—
Oh no—the world was newly crowned
With flowers when first we met!

'Twas twilight, and I bade you go,
But still you held me fast;
It was the Time of Roses,—
We pluck'd them as we passed.—

What else could peer thy glowing cheek,
That tears began to stud?
And when I ask'd the like of Love,
You snatched a damask bud;

And oped it to the dainty core,
Still glowing to the last,—
It was the Time of Roses,
We plucked them as we passed!

Of his serious poems we may take the last lines he ever wrote:

Farewell, Life! My senses swim;
And the world is growing dim;
Thronging shadows cloud the light,
Like the advent of the night,—
Colder, colder, colder still
Upwards steals a vapour chill—
Strong the earthy odour grows—
I smell the Mould above the Rose!

Welcome, Life! the Spirit strives!
Strength returns, and hope revives;
Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn
Fly like shadows at the morn,—
O'er the earth there comes a bloom—
Sunny light for sullen gloom,
Warm perfume for vapour cold—
I smell the Rose above the Mould!

Hood's repute as a humorist has too much overshadowed his merits as a poet, which—as Rossetti, an unerring judge, considered—were very great and real. In the temple of fame his monument, though it may not strike the careless eye, is one that will not crumble.

§ 7

MOORE

Thomas Moore, who was born twenty years before Hood and outlived him by seven, achieved during his lifetime an exaggerated reputation and success that were in themselves romantic. For *Lalla Rookh,* which actually placed him momentarily on the level of Byron and Scott, he received £3,000 from his publishers! But his fame spent itself almost as quickly as he spent the fortune it brought him, and the anxieties of his old age were relieved by a Civil list pension. *Lalla Rookh,* however, has a niche in the archives of romantic poetry, while some of his lyrics,

such as *Oft in the Stilly Night, The Last Rose of Summer,* and others of the *Irish Melodies* which have been set to music by a whole tribe of composers during the last century, will survive. So also will his *Life of Byron,* which ranks among the best biographies ever given to the world.

§ 8

WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born in 1757 in London, where his father kept a draper's shop. He was brought up behind the counter, where, instead of giving up his heart to handling cravats and stockings, he drew sketches and scribbled verses on the backs of bills. From his youth he suffered from illusions—he saw God putting His head out of a window, angels perching in a tree, the prophet Ezekiel sitting under a green bough. In view of his artistic tastes he was apprenticed at fourteen to a wood-engraver, and in 1782 married a servant-girl who could not write her name, but who turned out one of the best wives that ever a man had. He was employed by Hayley, the poet, to illustrate his life of Cowper, and stayed for three years at his house at Felpham, where he used to wander out in the evening by the sea, meeting Moses and Dante, "grey, luminous, majestic, colossal shadows," and watching the funeral rites of fairies. On one occasion he painted Lot's portrait; on another he met the devil coming downstairs. His visions, as the years went by, became more and more demented—demi-gorgons, nightmares, enormous fish preying on dead bodies, the sea-serpent, angels pouring out the vials of plague, Furies scowling in the sun.

Poems of Beauty and Simplicity

When we come to deal with his poetry, we find among much that is wild and whirling, and indeed sometimes unintelli-

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. G. G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., from their edition of "The Ancient Mariner," after the drawing by Willy Pogány.

"When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

. . . . . .

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist."

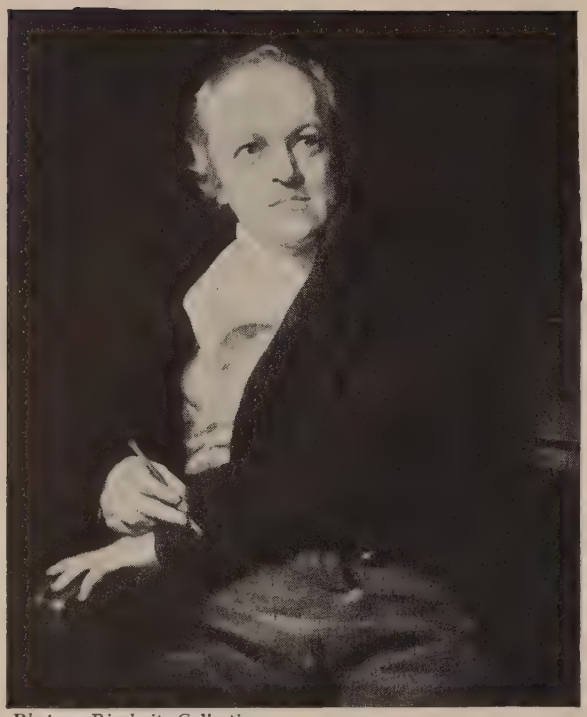

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM BLAKE, BY PHILLIPS

National Portrait Gallery, London.

A pious and loving soul, William Blake, poet and painter, neglected and misunderstood by the world, yet led a cheerful and contented life of poverty illumined by visions and celestial inspirations.

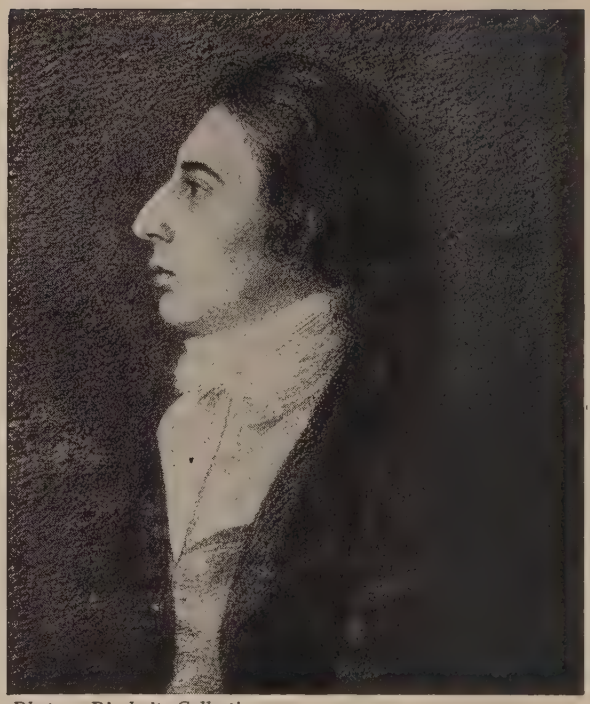

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, AT THE AGE OF 22

Drawn by Robert Hancock.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

The fame of Southey now rests on his vigorous prose, and especially on his classic *Life of Nelson*.

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RYDAL MOUNT, WORDSWORTH'S HOME

At Rydal Mount, overlooking Rydal Water in Westmorland, Wordsworth lived for thirty-seven years, and there in the peace of his beloved lake country he died.

gible, verses of the sweetest beauty—verses which gave the eyes of men their first glimpse into that kingdom of romance in which Keats and Shelley were afterwards to wander and to dwell. Even in his first book, *Poetical Sketches,* which appeared in 1783, we have such lines as these from *The Evening Star:*

> Smile on our loves; and while thou drawest round
> The sky's blue curtains scatter silver dew
> On every flower that closes its sweet eyes
> In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
> The lake: speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
> And wash the dusk with silver.

None of the great after-poets of romance ever surpassed in loveliness these exquisitely cadenced and softly-coloured lines.

In *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* which followed, we have his style of sweet and simple melody, limpid as a drop of dew, in the Introductory Verses:

> Piping down the valleys wild,
> Piping songs of pleasant glee,
> On a cloud I saw a child,
> And he laughing said to me:
>
> "Pipe a song about a lamb!"
> So I piped with merry cheer.
> "Piper, pipe that song again";
> So I piped: he wept to hear.
>
> "Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe:
> Sing thy songs of happy cheer!"
> So I sang the same again,
> While he wept with joy to hear.
>
> "Piper, sit thee down and write
> In a book, that all may read":
> So he vanished from my sight,
> And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
  And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
  Every child may joy to hear.

Here are some of the splendid verses *To the Tiger,* which perhaps are better known:

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

. . . . .

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

The number of what we may call single bars of verbal music are to be found on almost every single page. Here is one from the *Cradle Song:*

Sleep! Sleep! In thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Blake's life was as simple and yet as profoundly earnest as his poetry. He was content to live and die in poverty, happily married to one whom Swinburne called "the perfect wife." They resided for the most part in or about London, where he pursued

his vocation of engraving his and other works that appealed to him. Crabb Robinson, a contemporary diarist, gives an interesting glimpse of their life in his reminiscences:

> On the 17th (Decr. 1825) I called on him in his house in Fountain Court in the Strand. The interview was a short one, and what I saw was more remarkable than what I heard. He was at work engraving in a small bedroom, light and looking out on a mean yard—everything in the room squalid, & indicating poverty except himself. And there was a natural gentility about, & an insensibility to the seeming poverty which quite removed the impression. Besides, his linen was clean, his hand white & his air quite unembarrassed when he begged me to sit down, as if he were in a palace. There was but one chair in the room besides that on wh. he sat. On my putting my hand to it, I found that it would have fallen to pieces if I had lifted it. So, as if I had been a Sybarite, I said with a smile, 'Will you let me indulge myself?' And I sat on the bed and near him. . . . His wife (who survived him) was formed on the Miltonic model, & like the first wife, Eve, worshipped God in her husband, he being to her what God was to him.

He died in 1828, leaving a vast mass of drawings, and, it is said, a hundred volumes of poems in manuscript, all of which are lost.

§ 9

WILLIAM COBBETT

William Cobbett, who was born in 1762, at the village of Farnham in Hampshire, was the son of a small publican and working farmer, himself of long peasant descent. By no other has the finest side of the spirit of the decent English farmer and rustic been so perfectly expressed as by this hearty, energetic,

self-educated writer. If it ever could be said of an author that he was racy of the soil, William Cobbett is that author. His restless energy and forceful tendency of mind showed themselves from his earliest youth. When, at eleven years old, he was working in the Bishop of Winchester's garden at Farnham Castle, he heard of the splendours of Kew. Immediately he set off on foot to London, and at Richmond spent his last threepence on a copy of Swift's *Tale of a Tub,* which he afterwards said provoked a new birth of his intellect. At twenty-one, on his way to Guilford Fair, he, with equal suddenness, decided to mount a passing coach to London. Then, for seventeen years, he never saw his native place. After a short spell in a lawyer's office he enlisted; and, as a private, studied English and French grammar, and practised writing, making himself one of the great masters of English. He left the army at twenty-nine, and soon produced one of his vigorous pamphlets; the first of a long series attacking public abuses.

The greater part of his writings and activities were essentially political, but it was the countryman writing and talking. All his utterances were prejudiced to a degree, but with that wholesome prejudice based, not on any convention, but on temperament and individual experience. Far more practically than Carlyle, he loathed every sort of cant, and he showed this full as much in his personal life as in everything he said and wrote.

Rural Rides

His two principal country books, in the stricter sense, are *Rural Rides* and *Cottage Economy,* although he also wrote several books on gardening and the management of woodlands, and much country description distributed through his mainly political works. *Rural Rides* is a journal of horseback tours through almost every part of England, but especially through Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire, made by Cobbett between his

fifty-eighth and seventieth years. It includes magnificent descriptions of typical country scenery; shrewd commentaries on agricultural conditions, political asides suggested by things he saw; and criticisms, eulogistic, friendly, and contemptuous, of individuals encountered on his rides. It is one of the heartiest and most vital books in the language.

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XXVI

BYRON, SHELLEY, KEATS

BYRON, SHELLEY, KEATS

§ 1

BYRON

"Byron issues from the sea-waves ever fresh."

GOETHE

IN Byron we meet a poet whose personality, history, and character place him apart from other English poets of his own or any age. George Gordon Byron, sixth lord (1788-1824), came of a line of Byrons, or Burons, which stretched back to the Conquest. It was a race of fighters. Seven Byrons fought for their King at Edgehill. The first Lord Byron defended Newark and lost all his fortune in the royal cause. We may come at once to the fifth lord, William, whom, as his grandnephew, the poet succeeded. His wild character won him the name of "the wicked lord." In 1765 he was tried before the House of Lords for killing in a duel, fought in a locked tavern room in Pall Mall, by the light of one candle, his cousin, Mr. Chaworth, after a quarrel that was so frivolous as to indicate a deeper origin. Exempted from punishment by his privilege as a peer, he retired to his estate, Newstead Abbey, under a lasting cloud. He died childless in 1798, having taken no interest at all in his heir, whom he used to refer to as "the little boy who lives at Aberdeen"—the grandson of his brother, Admiral John Byron ("Foul-weather Jack"), and the future poet.

Byron's father was John Byron, a captain in the Army, who married Catherine Gordon, of Gight, as his second wife, was as untamable as his "wicked" uncle, and earned the name of "Mad Jack." His wife's property, which was considerable, fell into his hands and quickly disappeared in his dissipations. After their marriage in 1785 he took her to France, whence they soon returned, and their only child, George Gordon, was born in Holles Street, Oxford Street, London, on January 22, 1788. Some trouble in childbirth caused a malformation in one of his feet, which was examined and prescribed for by the great John Hunter, but no complete cure was effected, and, although the poet's head and features were of compelling beauty, this crippled state remained to be one of his lifelong embitterments.

When John Byron fled from his creditors to France in 1791, where he died in the same year, Mrs. Byron took her child to Aberdeen, where she had to live on the small remnant of her means, amounting to £150 a year.

Harrow and Cambridge

Such, in brief, were the sources of Byron's blood and the circumstances of his early childhood. His grand-uncle, the fifth lord, died in 1798, when Byron was ten years old. His heavily mortgaged and neglected estate passed into the hands of trustees, and the boy became a ward in Chancery under the guardianship of Lord Carlisle. He was sent to Dr. Glennie's school at Dulwich, whence he passed to Harrow in 1801. The head master, Dr. Joseph Drury, found him backward and intractable, but with something in him which caused him to say to Lord Carlisle: "He has talents, my lord, which will add lustre to his rank." Idle and slow to learn, Byron was already a precocious reader. He was pugnacious, generous, and extremely proud of his rank. His Harrow friendships, the chief of which was with Lord Clare, he afterwards described as "passions." Even before he left Harrow he had fallen madly in love with

Photo: Rischgitz Collection. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

THE BURNING OF SHELLEY'S BODY

From the Painting by Louis Edward Fournier.

The burning of Shelley's body was carried out in accordance with the quarantine law of Italy after his death by drowning in the Gulf of Spezzia. The last rites were performed in presence of Byron, Trelawny, and Leigh Hunt.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MAZEPPA, PRINCE OF THE UKRAINE

After H. Vernet

The incident depicted is taken from Byron's "Mazeppa." Mazeppa, page to John Casimir, King of Poland, losing his heart to Theresa, the young wife of a Polish gentleman, was seized by servants of the irate husband. He was stripped and bound to the back of an unbroken horse, and driven into the wild country of the Ukraine. At last the exhausted steed lies down to die surrounded by a herd of inquisitive wild horses, who

swerve aside,
And backward to the forest fly,
By instinct from the human eye.

his young kinswoman, Mary Chaworth, who, however, scorned him. Byron saw her after her marriage, which was unhappy, and took the farewell which is reflected in his lines, written in his sixteenth year: *Ah, Memory torture me no more.*

In the autumn of 1805 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, a young nobleman. Despite his slight lameness, he rowed, boxed, and became an adept with the pistol. Meanwhile his capricious and wild-tempered mother did much to disorder his character, and nothing to form it. Emotional crises, one after another, distorted his outlook on life. Already he was pouring out the poems which, at the age of nineteen, he published under the title *Hours of Idleness.* Few have merit, and few show promise of aught but trouble to a youth who, at this age, could write:

> Weary of love, devoured with spleen,
> I rest, a perfect Timon, at nineteen.

The butterfly was broken on the wheel of the *Edinburgh Review,* probably by Brougham, though Byron at first attributed the review to Jeffrey. Stung to the quick, he sat down to write the first of his poems that became famous, his free-hitting satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.* He laid about him without fear or scruple. In this poem he began his long vendetta with Southey—"God help thee, Southey, and thy readers too." To Wordsworth he alludes as one

> Who, both by precept and example, shows
> That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.

But later, on meeting Wordsworth, and being asked by Lady Byron how the young poet had got on with the old one, he confessed that his whole feeling had been one of reverence. He never allowed the satire to be republished.

The Grand Tour

In the autumn of 1808 he started on a "grand tour" with his friend John Cam Hobhouse. They sailed for Lisbon, and thence travelled to Seville, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Sardinia, Malta, Albania, and to Greece, where he visited Missolonghi, little dreaming that he would die there fifteen years later. It was in Athens that his love of the beautiful and innocent daughter of his hostess inspired one of the best of his lyrics: *Maid of Athens.*

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh, give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,
Zoe mou, sas agapo.[1]

By those tresses unconfin'd
Woo'd by each Ægean wind;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge;
By those wild eyes like the roe,
Zoe mou, sas agapo.

By that lip I long to taste;
By that zone-encircled waist;
By all the token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well;
By love's alternate joy and woe,
Zoe mou, sas agapo.

Maid of Athens! I am gone;
Think of me, sweet! when alone.
Though I fly to Istambol,
Athens holds my heart and soul.
Can I cease to love thee? No!
Zoe mou, sas agapo.

While returning to England in 1811 he heard of his mother's illness, and he never again saw her alive. He settled

[1] My life, I love you.

in St. James's Street, in a house which was demolished in the Spring of 1923. From its door he drove with his friend Dallas to take his seat—which he did very awkwardly and in a mood of disdain—in the House of Lords. In the same house he was living when his first two cantos of *Childe Harold* lifted him into dazzling fame in a single day. They were published by John Murray, the second, at 32 Fleet Street, and at once set literary London aflame with wonder and admiration. Moore tells of Byron's table being strewn with letters from statesmen, great ladies, and unknown admirers.

Nothing like *Childe Harold* had been known. Moore had told Byron that he feared the poem was too good for its age. But, as Professor John Nichol says (*Byron,* English Men of Letters Series): "Its success was due to the reverse being the truth. It was just on the level of its age." Men and women who professed they could not read Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Southey, rushed to enjoy the fire and flow of *Childe Harold.*

§ 2

The Narrative Poems

Byron was now fairly under way. In the next four years he poured out those oriental narrative poems to which he could bring not only white lava-like feeling but personal knowledge of scene and character. In 1813 came *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos;* in 1814, *The Corsair* and *Lara;* in 1816, *The Siege of Corinth, Parasina,* and *The Prisoner of Chillon.* He wrote them all at a heat. He wrote *The Corsair* in ten days, pacing up and down Albemarle Street at night. "*Lara* I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814." *The Bride* was thrown off in four days. Recounting these feats he remarked, "This I take to be a humiliating confession, as it proves my want of judgment in publishing, and the public in reading, things which

cannot have stamina or permanence." But although time has somewhat confirmed, it has more largely reversed this self-judgment. As Matthew Arnold says, "The producer of such poems could not but publish them, the public could not but read them. Nor could Byron have produced his work in any other fashion. . . . He wrote, as he truly tells us, to relieve himself, and he went on writing because he found the relief indispensable." These narratives—*The Corsair* may be partly excepted—were lacking in unity and continuity of plot. Byron justly described *The Giaour* as "a string of passages." But, says Arnold again, "he had a wonderful power of conceiving a single incident, a single situation; of throwing himself upon it, grasping it as if it were real and he saw and felt it, and of making us see and feel it too." And a great wind of freedom blew through it all, and blows to this day. Are we yet either so emancipated or so enchained, as to be able to read without a thrill the opening lines of *The Corsair?*

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home!
These are our realms, no limits to their sway—
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
From toil to rest, and joy in every change.
Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!
Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;
Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
Whom slumber soothes not—pleasure cannot please—
Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?
That for itself can woo the approaching fight,
And turn what some deem danger to delight;
That seeks what cravens shun with more than zeal,
And where the feebler faint—can only feel—

Feel—to the rising bosom's inmost core,
Its hope awaken and its spirit soar?

Weakly constructed, and falsely sentimental, as these poems may be, they contain passages which stir the blood, and a cry for liberation and justice and the play of human nature to which our hearts must still respond. Byron struck a chord which made a common chord tremble, and it need not surprise us that 14,000 copies of *The Corsair* were sold in one day. He had taught tens of thousands of people, who had never read poetry, to read such poetry as his with rapture. Undoubtedly it is often unfinished, and seldom exquisite, but his sweep of movement, his sovereign ease, his air of expressing himself, not as a writer, but as a man, carry us away again and again. Arnold complains of the want of sequence in that famous passage in *The Giaour,* "He who hath bent him o'er the dead," but he does not fail to give these lines to us in his selections of the best of Byron's poetry:

He who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of death is fled,
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress
(Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers),
And mark'd the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there,
The fix'd yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold Obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon;
Yes, but for these and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,

He still might doubt the tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by death reveal'd!
Such is the aspect of this shore;
'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more.

Byron's Spell

Byron reigned by the magnetism of his personality, by the torrential force of his rhetoric, and by the freshness and variety of his material. As Professor Saintsbury says *(A Short History of English Literature),* he brought into English poetry "a vast and valuable stock of new imagery, new properties, new scenery and decoration. . . . Always he has the merit of changing the scenes, the characters, the temper of English poetry, of at least apparently widening its scope, of giving a dash of the continental, the cosmopolitan, to vary our insularity and particularism." Above all he was a poet of revolt, with the courage of revolt. His appeal to the young has no doubt abated since he turned the heads of the youth of the Regency period, but he remains, even in this narrow category, the chief of the English-writing poets who may be described as *awakeners* of the poetic sense. It is true that a great reaction set in after his death, and that Carlyle did not see how his fame was to endure because "no genuine productive thought was ever revealed by him to mankind." But if he did not add much to the sum of human thought he has taught millions to think and feel. Arnold's judgment has shortened the range of Carlyle's:

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.

Byron has always been *felt* in this way, and it is impossible to read again his best passages without understanding and sharing the spell which he threw over his generation in this country and

Printed W. A. Mansell & Co.

GEORGE GORDON, SIXTH BARON BYRON

AFTER THE PAINTING BY T. PHILLIPS.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

These contrasting portraits of Lord Byron invite comment, which perhaps partly explains the great [illegible] of the Poet's reputation. Both, however, we have almost striking portraits. Those the Byron of romance, the Byron of Missolonghi.

in Europe. Swinburne, who, of all the later critics, had reason to be offended by Byron's want of finished art, defined his supreme quality as "the excellence of sincerity and strength." It is assuredly some excellence of sincerity and strength that young hearts discover in Byron—in *Childe Harold,* in *The Corsair,* in *The Siege of Corinth,* and in lines like these:

The mountains look on Marathon—
  And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
  I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
  That looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
  And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
  My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
  The heroic bosom beats no more.
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
  Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
  Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
  Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
  A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ.

§ 3

Exiled

We must refer, though briefly, to the great crisis in Byron's career which was at once his doom and inspiration after the first *Childe Harold* period. The story of his disastrous marriage to Miss Milbanke, of his failure as a married man, of the still unsolved mystery of their separation, accompanied by the crash of Byron's social reputation, and followed by his departure from England, never to return, is too vexed and complicated to be detailed here. A discussion which cannot be ended had here better not be begun. The London world turned against its hero and darling, vindictively, mercilessly. Byron himself tells us: "The press was active and scurrilous . . . my name—which had been a knightly or a noble one since William the Norman—was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me." He landed at Ostend in April, 1816, and began to "bear through Europe the pageant of his bleeding heart."

The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* were published in 1812, and they belong therefore to Byron's early period; the third and fourth were the first expressions of his *inflamed* genius. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has asked his Cambridge students to compare these two portions. "Who can fail to perceive the sudden deepening of the voice to sincerity, the as sudden lift to music and imagination?" At once he finds a subject, and great words for it, in the field of Waterloo, where less than a year before the master of Europe had become the jest of fame. Everyone knows those splendid lines, but one is glad that Sir Arthur quotes the stanza which in anthologies and "reciters" is so often cut off, the beautiful tribute to Frederick Howard, who fell in the late evening of the battle-day when charging the French with his hussars:

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
  And mine were nothing, had I such to give;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
  Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
  With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
  With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

The line italicised is a supremely fine expression of the energy, the liberty, and movement of Nature.

Nor can one argue with those who deny the name of great poetry to the stanza on the dying gladiator in the Coliseum, to whose ears, half sealed in his last agony, came the "inhuman shout" which hailed the victor:

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
  Were with his heart—and that was far away;
He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
  But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play.
  There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday—
  All this rush'd with his blood—Shall he expire
And unavenged? Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!

§ 4

Don Juan

But the real, the most puissant Byron is found in *Don Juan*. This epic abounds in every kind of literary material: wit, satire, description, characterisation, self-communing, accusation, dreaming. As a piece of gay description take the pirate Lambro's return to his island, where he finds the shipwrecked Don Juan and his daughter Haidée rejoicing in their young love among his dancing domestics.

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
  His garden trees all shadowy and green;
He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,
  The distant dog-bark; and perceived between
The umbrage of the wood, so cool and dun,
  The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen
Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes,
Of coloured garbs, as bright as butterflies.

. . . . .

And further on a group of Grecian girls,
  The first and tallest her white kerchief waving,
Were strung together like a row of pearls,
  Linked hand in hand, and dancing; each too having
Down her white neck long floating auburn curls—
  (The least of which would set ten poets raving);
Their leader sang—and bounded to her song
With choral step and voice the virgin throng.

And here, assembled cross-legg'd round their trays,
  Small social parties just begun to dine;
Pilaus and meats of all sorts met the gaze,
  And flasks of Samian and of Chian wine,
And sherbet cooling in the porous vase;
  Above them their dessert grew on its vine;
The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er,
Dropped in their laps, scarce plucked, their mellow store.

Contrast with this the awesome opening stanza of the description of the shipwreck:

'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down
  Over the waste of waters; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
  Of one whose hate is mask'd but to assail.
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,
  And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep; twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

Or take again that sudden hymnal outburst:

Ave Maria! blessed be the hour!
  The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
  Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower.

. . . . .

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
  Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
  Look up to thine and to thy Son's above.
Ave Maria! oh, that face so fair!
  Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty dove—
What though 'tis but a pictured image?—strike—
That painting is no idol—'tis too like.

. . . . .

Sweet hour of twilight!—in the solitude
  Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
  Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Cæsarian fortress stood,
  Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

In his pictures of Nature Byron is magnificent on the ordinary plane of sight and feeling; that it is which makes him the awakener of youth and the delight of tired men. With him the effect is always instant, intelligible, and sensuous. Very frequently indeed he parts with exalted feeling only to achieve a more masterful power. What could be finer in its casual, sketchy truthfulness than the description of the plain of Troy (in *Don Juan*), as he really saw it?

A Soldier's Grave

Nothing in his personal life became Byron like his end when he took up arms for Greece in the War of Greek Independence, and laid down his over-lived life at Missolonghi on April 19, 1824. It is impossible to say what manner of man

or what different manner of poet he would have become had he not died at thirty-seven. Stopford Brooke believed that his last great act, his sacrifice of his time, his money, and his life for Greece, would have marked a deep change. "Byron did not reach manhood in this world, the manhood which has learned self-restraint for the sake of high purposes. He was entering it when he died." Let us rather say he had entered it when he wrote his last lines at Missolonghi:

> Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
> Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
> Their life-blood tracks its parent-lake,
> And then strike home!
>
> Tread those reviving passions down,
> Unworthy manhood!—unto thee
> Indifferent should the smile or frown
> Of beauty be.
>
> If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*
> The land of honourable death
> Is here:—up to the field, and give
> Away thy breath.
>
> *Seek out—less often sought than found—*
> *A soldier's grave, for thee the best;*
> *Then look around, and choose thy ground,*
> *And take thy rest.*

Thus ended Childe Harold's last pilgrimage. If his wishes had been allowed to rule the manner of Byron's burial, he would not have been brought home, to be buried like a county magnate in the heart of England. On some lonely Ægean isle, or on some Grecian promontory, amid the murmur of the waves, his tomb would have recalled to every pilgrim his majestic verse:

> Between two worlds Life hovers like a star,
> 'Twixt Night and Morn, upon the horizon's verge.
> How little do we know that which we are!
> How less what we may be! The eternal surge

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WEST FRONT OF NEWSTEAD ABBEY

The ancestral seat of the Byron family until 1818, Newstead Abbey housed the relics of Byron until the year 1921, when they were sold.

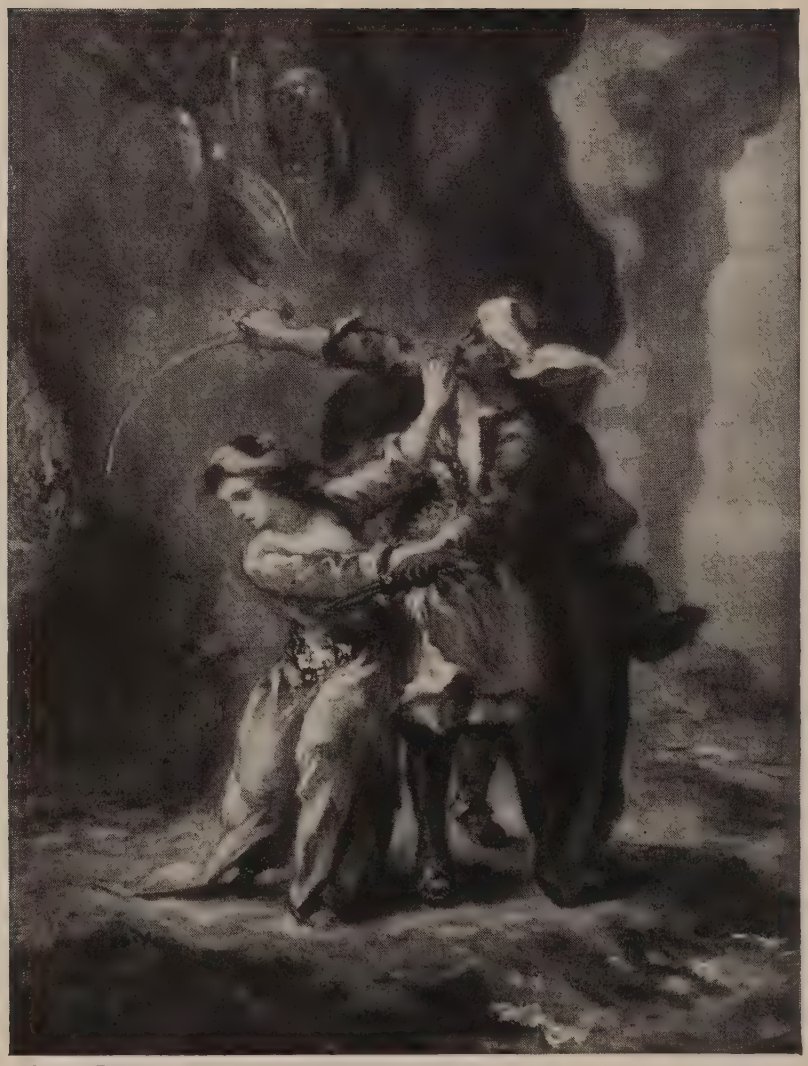


Photo: Braun.

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS

From the painting by Delacroix.

The Louvre, Paris.

Then forth my father's scimitar,
Thou ne'er hast seen less equal war!
Farewell, Zuleika!

Canto ii.

Of Time and Tide rolls on and bears afar
Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lashed from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of Empires heave but like some passing waves.

But Byron's remains were brought to England—to be refused burial in Westminster Abbey, and to be laid in the family vault at Hucknall Torkard, a mile or two from Newstead Abbey, amid the scenes which had witnessed his pure, boyish passion for Mary Chaworth.

§ 5

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Shelley stands alone among the singers of the ages. He owned no master and left no disciple. The music which he "swept from the wild harp of time" came with a new sound on the world's ear, and no minstrel ever caught its melody again.

He was born in 1792, at Horsham, the eldest son of a country Squire, a man of ancient and distinguished race, but a strange progenitor for a poet so ethereal. From the first the boy, beautiful as an angel and as tender-hearted, tremblingly alive in every fibre, strung like a wind-harp to the breath of every breeze, seemed like a being from another sphere. The sight of pain or sorrow turned him sick with rage and pity. At Eton—to him "a world of tyrants and of foes"—where he struck a penknife through a bully's hand, he gained the title of Mad Shelley. And mad indeed he may be called:

If mad it is to be unlike the world.

In due course he went to Oxford. There he put forth a pamphlet of two pages on the Necessity of Atheism. The authorities, without argument, expelled him promptly. Yet the University has, in recent years, set up his statue, and so claimed him, with some irony, among her cherished sons.

Two years later a pretty, empty-headed schoolgirl fell in love with him, declared she could not live without him, and they eloped together. Such a union could not last. They separated and Shelley married again. His second wife was Mary Godwin, afterwards the author of *Frankenstein.* They settled in Italy, where nearly all his chief poems were written and from which he was never to return.

During all this time he had been writing. But, strange to say, his early poems and his wild romances showed not only no distinction, but no promise. *Queen Mab* was something better; *Alastor,* better still; and in the long poem *The Revolt of Islam,* and above all in the Dedication to his wife, we hear the Shelley note in its perfection:

> So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
> And I return to thee, my own heart's home,
> As to his Queen some victor knight of Faery,
> Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome.

At Venice he met Byron. In his splendid poem *Julian and Maddalo* (Shelley and Byron) he threw a vivid light upon his brother-poet.

> The sense that he was greater than his kind
> Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
> By gazing on its own exceeding light.

It is a fact that Shelley looked up to Byron as to a superior being. But all his life he suffered from illusions. He had also a strange liking for the verse of Southey—much as the Fairy Queen stuck roses in the head of Bottom.

"Prometheus Unbound"

It was while staying at Byron's villa at Este that he began, in 1818, the vast poetic drama, *Prometheus Unbound*—a work that in sheer lyric power and splendour has no parallel in any

language. Æschylus, after his play *Prometheus Bound,* left a sequel, *Prometheus Unbound,* which the world has lost. Shelley's drama supplies its place, though it bears but slight resemblance to a work of the Greek stage. As in Æschylus, his Prometheus, as the friend of man, is chained by Zeus upon the mountain crag. But now he writhes in fierier torment than the eagle's beak. Swarms of black vampire-demons hang about him, bringing him visions of the dire calamities which, throughout the ages, the race of man is fated to endure. But when the Furies leave him, missions of choral spirits, sea-nymphs, echoes, sing him songs of consolation, filling the air, and all the play, with their enchanted music, or with continual syllables of dulcet speech. Here is the first soliloquy of Prometheus, spoken in solitude upon his peak:

I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones,
Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east.

Here is a Spirit-song, which seems to fall from heaven in music, "sweet as a singing rain of silver dew":

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aëreal kisses,
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!

After *Prometheus* came another play, *The Cenci*—this time a drama of real life. No idea of the power and splendour of the work can be given in this place, any more than *Hamlet* could be summed up in a paragraph.

The Witch of Atlas is an enchanted fairy-tale. Strange and wild are the adventures of the lovely witch, a kind of child of Ariel, who dwelt beside a fountain in a mountain cave:

A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a temple's cloven roof—her hair
Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

And first the spotted cameleopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes intervolved;—all gaunt

And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came blithe as in the olive copses thick
Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew:
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teasing the god to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

Here is a description of her magic vessel:

She had a boat, which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to his daughter: from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom, the pinnace passed;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,
When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

§ 6

Emilia Viviani

Then came Shelley's love for Emilia Viviani. She was a lovely girl, with the shape of a Greek statue, and with its marble pallor, her dark hair wreathed Greek-fashion, and with large sleepy eyes that could awake to fiery passion. She had been shut up in a convent by her father until she would consent to wed a suitor of his choice. There Shelley saw her, pitied her sad lot, and made unavailing efforts to secure her freedom. A wild, electric, yet ideal passion sprang up between them—a passion which in *Epipsychidion*—"a poem on the soul"—he enshrined as if in syllables of imperishable fire. In the concluding lines—which we will quote in part—he dreams, as many a lover has before him, of flying with his love to some fair land, far from the world of men:

Emily,
A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow.
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,—
No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple east;
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of paradise;

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, BY GEORGE CLINT

Shelley was drowned in the Gulf of Spezzia at the early age of thirty.

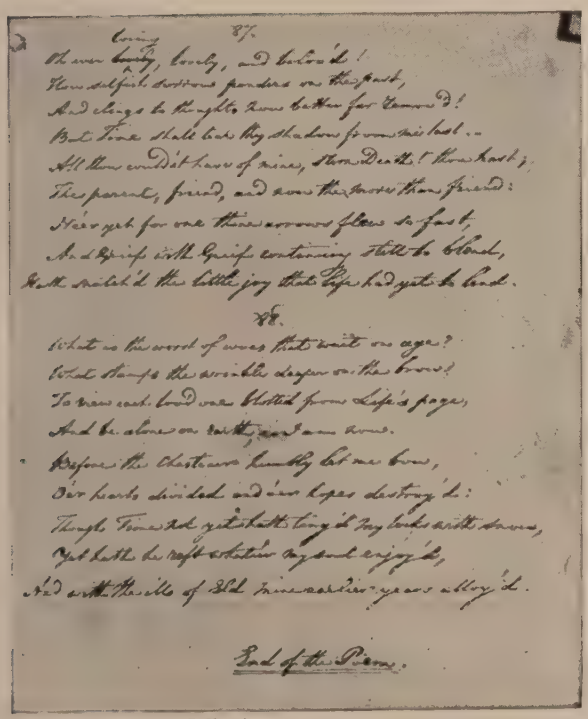


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MS. OF CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

Copied from Byron's original MS. in the British Museum.

Byron's "Childe Harold" was given to the public two days after the delivery of his maiden speech in the House of Lords. As Byron himself said, he "woke to find himself famous."

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

LORD BYRON

From the mezzotint by C. Turner, after the painting by W. E. West, painted at Pisa, 1822.

Of Byron it may be said that probably no other great man of letters was so misunderstood during his life, and so misrepresented after his death. Lord Byron gave his life for his one whole-hearted and generous enthusiasm—the love of Greece.

Photo: Alinari.

"THE SHIPWRECK OF DON JUAN," BY DELACROIX

The Louvre, Paris.

The incident selected by Delacroix for this painting shows the unhappy occupants of the long boat from the ill-fated *Trinidada*, facing starvation. Lots are being drawn to decide which of their number shall be sacrificed to provide food for the remainder.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

DON JUAN, SHIPWRECKED ON THE CYCLADES, DISCOVERED BY HAIDÉE, THE PIRATE'S DAUGHTER

From the painting by Ford Madox Brown in the Luxembourg.

The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam.

But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know.
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender ocean-king, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time.
This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
And our veins beat together; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them; and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one,
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One heaven, one hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation!
Woe is me!
The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare universe
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

In the year following, 1821, Keats died, and Shelley wrote the great Elegy of *Adonais:*

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep

Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Shelley was under the impression, as Byron was, that Keats had been killed by the critics. The impression was an error, but Shelley's retaliation is a superb piece of invective:

The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirits' awful night.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

Nor must we fail to note the gorgeous lines:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly.
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

Shelley himself thought *Adonais* the best thing he had written. "I confess," he said, "I should be surprised if *that* poem were born to an eternity of oblivion." It may be noted

that, during his own lifetime, none of his poems sold a hundred copies, and many not a single one.

We must now consider Shelley's songs and lyrics. We will take only such as can be quoted complete, for to take portions of *The Skylark, The Cloud, The West Wind,* and so on, is to ruin the effect which the poet had in mind. It is first to be observed that Shelley had two styles, quite different styles, the gorgeous and the simple. Of the first, let us take *To Night,* a most Shelley-like example:

Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
"Wouldst thou me?"
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
"Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?"—And I replied,
"No, not thee."

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled.
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

Compare the style of this with *Ozymandias,* in its sublime simplicity:

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Shelley is, of course, one of the world's supreme song-writers. Here are two examples which are worthy of the greatest of the Elizabethans:

(1)

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle.
Why not I with thine?—

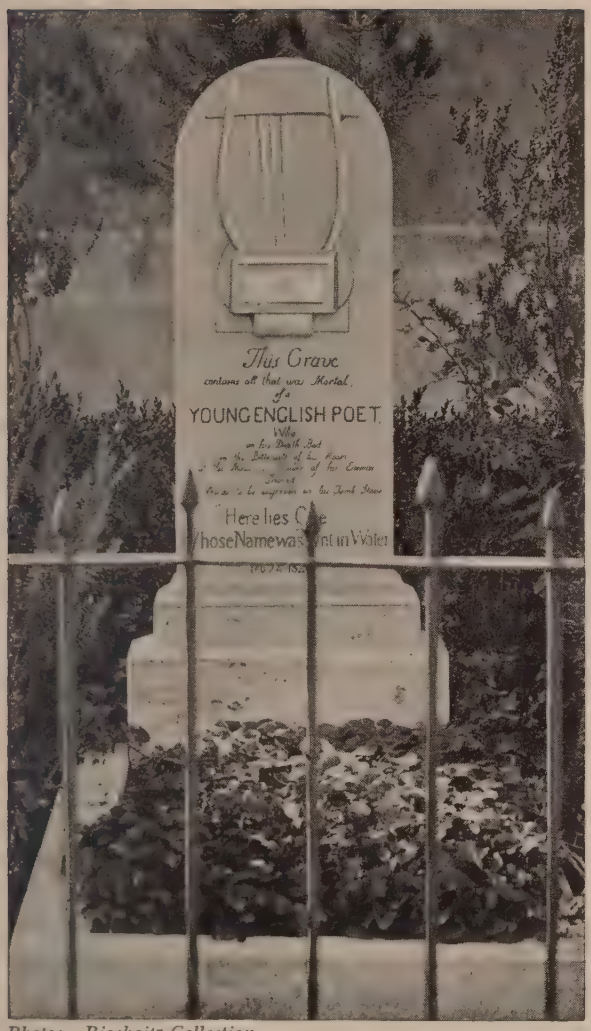


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

KEATS'S GRAVE IN THE OLD PROTESTANT CEMETERY AT ROME

The epitaph on Keats's tombstone, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," was of the Poet's own devising. The epitaph is beautiful in its humility, but it is certain that the name of Keats will be revered long after the stone itself has crumbled to dust.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"THE EVE OF ST. AGNES"

After the Painting by Maclise.

. . . her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one.

The Eve of St. Agnes.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

KEATS'S HOUSE: LAWN BANK, HAMPSTEAD

Formerly Wentworth Place.

Here Keats lived from 1817 to 1820, and it was during his occupancy of this house that he wrote the *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.

VENUS AND ANCHISES

From the Painting by Sir W. B. Richmond, R.A.

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Therefore he poured desire into her breast
Of young Anchises
Feeding his herds among the mossy fountains
Of the wide Ida's many-folded mountains,—
Whom Venus saw, and loved, and the love clung
Like wasting fire her senses wild among.

SHELLEY.

See the mountains kiss high heaven
  And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
  If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
  And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth
  If thou kiss not me?

(2)

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose-leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

§ 7

Prose Writings

Some mention must be made of Shelley's prose. Matthew Arnold thought that his prose writings "would resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry." The words, like Hamlet's, are rather wild and whirling. No prose ever written is likely to do that. But if not, like his verse, unique in splendour, Shelley's prose is of a beauty all its own. Perhaps the best of it is in his letters, with their travel-pictures, the pen-paintings of a poet.

Sometimes Shelley painted the same scene both in prose and verse, so that we are able to set the two pictures side by side. His description of Pompeii is an excellent example:

> Above and between the multitudinous shafts of sunshining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its

line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant deep peals seem to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames with a sullen and tremendous sound.

The Tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them, you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of inconstant wind, as it were, like the steps of ghosts.

Now here is the replica in verse:

I stood within the city disinterred,
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of Spirits passing through the streets, and heard
The mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls.

The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood.
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke.
I felt, but heard not. Through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood.

The prose is very fine descriptive writing—splendid. But is it equal to the verse? Where in it is that penetrating music which has the power, like the very mountain-voice, to shake the soul?

Apart from Shelley's word-music, it is clear that he had the keenest sense of the music of sound. Only a real music-lover could have written the enchanting lines:

> I pant for the music which is divine,
> My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
> Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
> Loosen the notes in a silver shower.

It is often charged against the poetry of Shelley that, while strong in music, it is weak in imagery, in pictorial effect. It is true that Shelley's is a style of glowing colour, but not often boldly graphic. Sometimes, indeed, Shelley not only colours, but draws also, like a master; as in the noble picture of the Hours in the *Prometheus*—the wild-eyed charioteers, with bright hair streaming, leaning forward in their cars to lash their rainbow-winged and flying steeds. Sometimes, also, he has a little passing piece of imagery such as this:

> Two sister-antelopes
> By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
> Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream—

A little picture, half painted, half suggested, of an indescribable witchery of effect. As a rule, however, Shelley cares far less for definite imagery than for effects of light and colour; effects varying through all the scale, from scenes of vast dim tracts "robed in the lustrous gloom of leaden-coloured even"—from wild waves lighted awfully:

> By the last glare of day's red agony,
> Which from a rent among the fiery clouds
> Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep—

down to the light-dissolving star-showers of soft-breaking seas, or the green and golden fire of glow-worms gleaming at twilight from the bells of lilies.

But what chiefly separates Shelley's pictures from those of other poets is his amazingly fine sense of tenderness of colour. There is nothing equal to his work in this respect; nothing that glows like it, yet is so delicate. Some of his effects stand quite apart—alone in their great beauty. Take the description of the mystic shell which Proteus gave to Asia:

> See the pale azure fading into silver,
> Lining it with a soft yet glowing light;
> Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

The secret of this sort of colouring, so rich, yet so ethereal, belongs to Shelley only, among the poets of the world.

As to Shelley's music, there is little need to speak. From every line we have been reading it comes thrilling out, celestial as an angel's. For those whose spirit is attuned to hear it, comment is superfluous, and for others, idle. Who can "explain" a melody of Chopin to a man who has no ear?

Leghorn

Alas! The harp that woke that music was too soon to sound no more. Early in July, 1822, Shelley set sail in a small boat from Leghorn. In a sudden squall the vessel sank, and Shelley, who could never learn to swim, went down without an effort. Some days later the body was washed up, and burnt, in antique fashion, on the shore. The heart alone was saved, conveyed to Rome, and buried near the resting-place of Keats. The stone bears the epitaph *Cor Cordium*—the heart of hearts —and is followed by the lines:

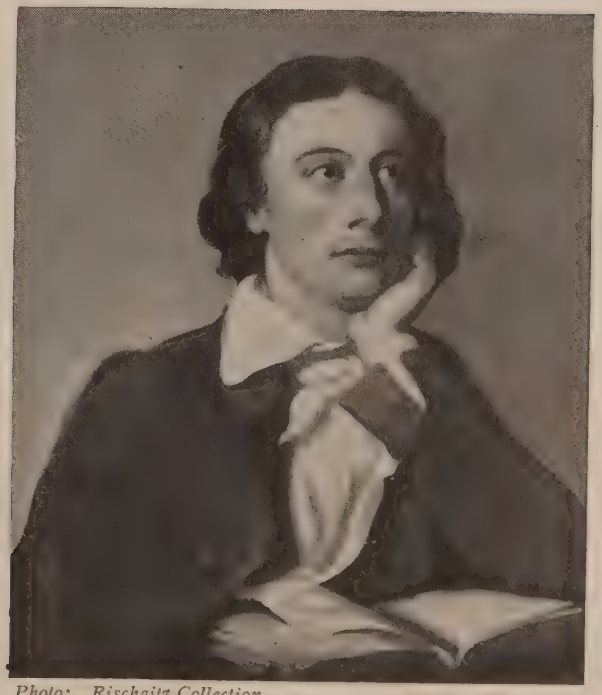
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

Well chosen were the words of Ariel's song to set on Shelley's

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE MONUMENT TO PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

After the Engraving by G. Stodart, from the Group by H. Weekes, A.R.A. Christchurch Church, Hants.



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KEATS, BY W. HILTON

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Keats was one of the greatest colourists in English literature. Eager, enthusiastic, and sensitive, harassed in his later years by ill-health and narrow means, he wrote verse which by reason of its exquisite melody will live for all time.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

It is amazing that such verses should have been written by a poet who was a mere boy.

His next volume was *Endymion*—the story of the mountain-shepherd and the goddess of the Moon. It is full of lines still weak, but often lovely in their very weakness, and interspersed with passages of growing strength and splendour, such as the description of Bacchus and his revellers:

And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame.

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass,
Tipsily quaffing.

Onward these myriads—with song and dance;
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-foot alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,

Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seaman, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

It is interesting to note that these lines are a replica in words of the painting of "Bacchus and Ariadne," by Titian, in the National Gallery.

The very first line of the poem has passed into the language:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

And one such thing of beauty is the "Song of Sorrow" in book iv:

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
To give the glow-worm light?
Or on a moonless night
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

Soon after the appearance of *Endymion* Keats fell in love. The lady, Fanny Brawne, was a charming creature, young, gay, and volatile, something of a rattle and a great deal of a flirt, who kept her jealous lover on the rack. In vain were all his pleadings:

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading, brief pride of an hour,
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake—
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower.
If not, may my eyes close,
Love! on their last repose.

Better, indeed, for his happiness, to die at twenty-five than to wear his life out with the feather-headed Fanny.

His last volume, *Lamia, and other Poems,* appeared in 1820. As it contained *Hyperion, Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes,* and the five great Odes, it is not too much to say that it is one of the finest books of poems ever given to the world.

Let us consider first the great blank-verse poem of *Hyperion,* of which Byron's panegyric has been quoted. Here is the passage he refers to, the picture of the vanquished Titans in their den of refuge, beaten in combat by the younger gods:

> It was a den where no insulting light
> Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
> They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
> Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
> Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
> Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seemed
> Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
> Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns;
> And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
> Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
> Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
> Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
> Stubborned with iron. All were not assembled:
> Some chained in torture, and some wandering.
> Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareus,
> Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyrion,
> With many more, the brawniest in assault,
> Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
> Dungeoned in opaque element to keep
> Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
> Locked up like veins of metal, cramped and screwed;
> Without a motion, save of their big hearts
> Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed
> With sanguine, feverous, boiling gurge of pulse.
> Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
> Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered;
> And many else were free to roam abroad,
> But for the main, here found they could covert drear.
> Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
> Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque

When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word or look, or action of despair.
Creus was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iapetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbèd tongue
Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurled length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working.

To match this picture we must go to the first two books of *Paradise Lost,* or certain parts of the *Inferno.*

The scene of *Lamia* is an enchanted forest, a place of fauns and dryads, with the god Hermes hovering on coloured wings about the dingles, in search of a coy nymph who has escaped him. He comes by chance upon a snake amidst a thicket—a snake who is enchanted also. It is Lamia, the woman-serpent, a thing of beauty and of fear:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed at once some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars like Ariadne's tiar.
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!

She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes—what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.

The god, with a touch of his transfiguring wand, charms her back into a woman's shape, and sets her down in Corinth, whence she came. There she meets her lover, Lysius, a young Greek. By spells she builds a splendid palace in a single night, with a banquet-table glowing with a marriage feast. But when the guests, the friends of Lysius, assemble, they find among them a little bald old withered man, Apollonius the Philosopher, the bridegroom's tutor. He mutters in his pupil's ear a deadly warning:

"Fool! Fool" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor moved: "from every ill
Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"

"A serpent!" he re-echoed. No sooner said than with a frightful scream she vanished into air.

"The Eve of St. Agnes"

The Eve of St. Agnes must be reckoned, on the whole, the most splendid of Keats's poems. It tells the story of a lovely lady shut up within a castle on St. Agnes' Eve, when maidens see their lovers in their dreams. Porphyro, her own lover, steals into the castle at the peril of his life—"for there were sleeping dragons all around"—and conceals himself within the maiden's chamber, so that when she wakens her eyes alight upon no visionary lover, but upon the living man whom she adores. This is the description of the lovely Madeline, about to seek the sleep of magic dreams:

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or woe betide!
But to her heart her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire crèeps rustling to her knees.
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,

Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray:
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.

It has been generally assumed that, because he often took his stories from the Greek mythology, Keats wrote in the Greek spirit. Nothing can be further from the truth. Keats was above all things the poet of romance.

Keats must, on the whole, be placed at the head of poet-painters. He had, in unapproached degree, the two essential gifts of a great artist—the sense of beauty and the sense of colour. He is the greatest colourist in literature. Before him, there was nothing of that passionate delight in colour for its own sake—nothing even in the best of Chaucer or of Spenser—which can bear comparison for a moment with such a study, for example, as that of Lamia, the witch-serpent, which has been given above.

Keats, like all great colourists, loved crimson in his soul. It would not have been possible to him, as it was to Chaucer and to Wordsworth, to glut his passion on a daisy, rather than on "the wealth of globed peonies." He loved the lustrous bubbling of red wine—the glowing of the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings—the blood-red scutcheon blazoned in the panes. Exuberance of colour was the gift of Keats to poetry.

The surest mark of a born painter is the tendency to shun abstractions and to think in imageries; and of this tendency perhaps no poet ever really had so great a share as Keats. To a mind in which this tendency is strong, it is not enough to tell us, for example, that a night is "bitter chill"—chillness is an abstract notion; it must have form and substance; it must proceed to set before our eyes a series of vivid little frosty *scenes:*

The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass;
And silent was the flock in woolly fold.

Scott was a poet of great graphic power. Let us try a piece of his description against a piece, as nearly like it as possible, of the work of Keats. Here, first, is Scott:

The corbels were carved grotesque and grim.

And here is Keats:

The carvèd angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

"Grotesque and grim" conveys a general impression, but no image; the reader is left to work out for himself the details of the piece of carving on the corbels. Keats sets the image itself before us, and we have only to regard it.

But there is something more than this about the work of Keats. There is the glamour, the deep romantic charm, in which his finest lines are "rich to intoxication"—such lines as those from the *Ode to a Nightingale,* which are one of the supreme wonders of the world of art:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Who does not feel the *glamour* of these immortal lines? Such verses differ from mere word-painting, however rich and vivid, as a musk-rose differs from a red camellia. The perfume of poetry is about them, as well as the colour and the form.

At the age of twenty-five Keats died at Rome. He sleeps beneath the pyramid of Caius Cestius, a spot so beautiful that, in the phrase of Shelley, whose heart was soon to rest beside him, "it makes one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." The inscription on the grave is of his own devising: "Here lies one whose name is writ in water." The lovely, touching words are idle. That name is written, not in water, but on the everlasting rock of Time.

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